

## How Much is Enough?

Purpose of Activity:

1. To introduce the concept of calories and the role they should play in healthy eating habits

Materials Needed:

- Traditional music with a fast enough tempo for aerobic activity
- A good mix of typical foods youth might eat for lunch and a snack – include both healthy and unhealthy foods and at least one soft drink (both diet and regular versions)
- Table to display the food
- White board
- Markers
- Paper and pencils
- Computers with Internet connection

Instructions:

1. Play the traditional music while you lead the group in a 4-5 minute aerobic or dance routine. Or have a volunteer to lead the group if you think that might be more fun for the participants.
2. When you're done, and while they catch their breath, pass out paper and pencils. Then, have participants come up to the table and look at the food choices you've laid out.
3. Tell them to write down what they would choose to eat for lunch, and what they would choose for a snack without looking at the nutrition labels.
4. Once they've made their choices, write the word "calories" on the white board. Explain the following:
  - The fuel we put in our cars is gasoline, right? And, remember that in Chapter 2 we learned that the fuel we put in our bodies is food
  - How do we measure how much fuel we put into our cars? (*by the gallon*).
  - Do you know one way we measure how much fuel we put into our bodies? By the "calorie," a unit of energy stored in food that the body uses to do all its work – like thinking or running or just keeping your heart pumping).
  - We can count the calories we eat each day, just like we can count the gallons of gas we put into our cars.
  - All cars don't need the same amount of fuel to fill up. Some cars need 12 or 15 gallons; others need 20 gallons. People are all different too. Remember, we're each unique. Not everyone needs the same number of calories every day. How old you are, how tall you are, how much exercise you get, how much you already weigh, how many muscles you have, and whether you're a boy or girl – all those things make a difference for the number of calories you should eat every day.

- Calories are what your body uses to function. The more you do, the more calories get used up. But when you don't use all the calories you eat, they get stored in your body as FAT. So, you don't want to take in more calories than you are going to use.
5. Help each participant determine approximately how many calories they should have every day to maintain their current weight. There are many websites with easy calculation programs to do this, including <http://www.fatfreakitchen.com/weightloss/weightloss.html>. *(The more computers you have in the room, the faster this step can be done.)*
  6. If youth don't know their exact height or weight, help them guess. *[Note: some might feel more comfortable doing this calculation alone, so that no one sees their weight.]*
  7. Remind participants that these are just approximate calorie rates. Also, make sure they understand that the calories they came up with are just for maintaining their weight. If they want to gain or lose weight, they would need to increase or decrease their calorie intake. *(Tell the youth that if they're interested in gaining or losing weight, you'll be glad to work with them after class to help calculate a good daily calorie intake number.)*
  8. Give youth the number of calories for each of the food items on the table. (Anything packaged will have the calories per serving listed. For fresh fruits and vegetables, you can easily check the calories at the following web site:  
<http://www.caloriecount.com/calories/browse/0900.html>.
    - This web site lists calories by individual piece of fruit and by cup of cut fruit).
    - Have youth figure out how many calories were in the lunch and snack foods they chose in the first activity.
    - How much of their recommended daily calorie intake is that?
      - Do they think after they added to that their breakfast and dinner calories (and any other snacks they might have) they would have eaten more or fewer calories than they should for one day?
    - If it's too many total calories, what lower calorie lunch food would they have instead?
  9. Tell youth that they probably burned about 30-40 calories just doing the aerobics for a few minutes at the beginning of the activity. If they did that kind of workout for 30 minutes, they'd probably burn about 200 calories! If they rode their bikes for 30 minutes, they'd burn about 250 calories. If they jumped rope for 30 minutes, they'd burn about 300 calories!
  10. Exercise is the best way to burn off calories. The more they exercise the more calories they will burn. The more they sit around watching TV, the fewer calories they will burn. And unused calories turn to fat!