Caregiver Workshop - Deciphering the Nutrition Facts Label

Audience: Caregivers

I. Nutrition Education Objectives:
   Goal 1: Students will comprehend concepts consistent with USDA guidance related to eating and physical activity for good health
   Objective: As a result of Pennsylvania’s SNAP-Ed plan, students will know, understand, analyze, and apply concepts, as developmentally appropriate, that are consistent with USDA guidance about the benefits of:
   1. Eating a variety of whole grain products, fruits and vegetables, low fat milk, and calcium-rich foods for meals and/or snacks.
   Goal 3: Caregivers will be able to access materials that will reinforce concepts to their school-age children related to eating and physical activity for good health.
   Objective: As a result of Pennsylvania’s SNAP-Ed plan, caregivers will:
   1. Access valid, reliable and appropriate resources that promote health.

II. Content
   A. Participants will interpret information on a food label.
   B. Participants will compare food labels to make the healthiest choice within their given options.

III. Materials
   A. Power Point presentation: Label Reading, laptop, projector
   B. Visuals: Assorted food labels from popular snack foods (1 per participant or pair of participants)
   C. Handouts:
      1. “A Healthy Habit – Read Food Labels” (LZE) or an appropriate alternate
      2. “Read it before you eat it” (Team Nutrition)
      3. ERN information sheet
      4. Copies of recipe to be prepared
      5. SNAP Brochure and Insert
      6. Caregiver newsletter- Food Labels
   D. Supplies: Pencils
   E. Cooking Activity: Tropical Smoothie Recipe
   F. Reinforcement that conveys the appropriate nutrition message
IV. Procedure
A. Introductory
   1. Introduction of Nutrition Educator.
      a. Introduce self
   1. Ice Breaker
      a. Ask participants: When you go to the store, how do you decide what foods to buy? Solicit answers from the audience. Prompts that can be used if needed: How does the price of food influence you? How do the people you are buying for influence what you buy? How does your lifestyle influence what you buy? How does health effect what you buy?
      b. Today, we are going to discuss food labels and how to read them so that we can make healthy choices for ourselves and our family.
   2. Lesson introduction - Ask the participants: Why is a healthy diet important? Solicit answers and discuss the following bullets:
      1. Better school performance for your children
      2. Developmental growth
      3. Weight management and the prevention of overweight and obesity for both children and adults.
      4. Reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and stroke
      5. Reduced risk of early mortality

B. Developmental
   1. Activity- Rank the calories.
      a. Have the participants try to guess which of each pair of food images on the slide represents a greater number of calories.
      b. For the final pairs (soda and juice, and soda and low-fat milk) the calorie content is very similar. Explain to the participants: We need to look at more than just calories when deciding which foods are healthiest for us and our families. Understanding food labels will allow us to do that.
   2. Introduce the concept of nutrition facts labels
      i. Food labels provide us with the detailed information we
need to make food choices.

ii. Parents play a key role in providing food for their family, often doing the purchasing. Knowing how to read and interpret food labels can help parents create a healthier environment for their children.

iii. The first thing many of us tend to do is look at the calories in a food product. This is a fine first step, but don’t stop there.

iv. It is also important to consider the serving size and servings per container. You may be eating more than the amount that the food label data is based on. You can even get your child involved in the multiplication of figures to practice their math skills.

v. When comparing foods in the store or in your cupboards, look for foods with lower calories, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium.

vi. Also pay attention to the ingredients list. Check for added sugars, especially near the top of the list.

3. Label walk-through
   a. Use the PowerPoint to guide the participants through the important parts of the food label.
   b. Explain: Serving size and servings per container tell us how much food the amounts listed on the label are based on. If you eat more than one serving, you need to multiply the amounts in the label to figure out what you actually consumed.
   i. How many calories and grams of fat would you consume if you ate the entire package represented by this label? 500 calories, and 24 grams of fat
   c. Portion vs. Serving
      i. A portion is the amount of food we actually eat in a sitting. It can be what we are served in a restaurant, the amount of food in a package, or the amount of food you actually put on your plate during a meal.
      ii. A serving is the amount of food that the nutrition facts (calories, fat, sugars, sodium, fiber, etc.) are based on. There is often more than one serving in a package of food, and the portions we choose are often much larger than the listed serving size.
      a. Use the example of a 20 oz. soda. Most sodas list 2.5 servings per container. If you drink the whole bottle as a portion, you have eaten 2.5 servings. Suddenly that small sugar boost is much more severe than you thought.
      b. There are strategies to control portion size. For example, instead of taking the entire bag of chips to
the couch, put a reasonable number in a bowl and put the bag away. This is really important in helping your kids choose the right amount of food.

c. Use the serving size listed on the Nutrition Facts label to help you choose appropriate portions.

d. **Explain the concept of percent daily value.** Percent Daily Value, listed in the right-hand column of the nutrition facts label serves as a guide of how the amount listed for each nutrient fits into a daily diet.

i. Percent daily value is a general guide. It is based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Some people need more calories, and some people need fewer calories.

ii. In general terms, a percent daily value of 5% or less is considered low, and 20% or more is considered high.

e. **Highs and Lows**

i. Some nutrients are important for our bodies and we need to make sure we are consuming enough of them. Which nutrients should be high (20% or above)? *Dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron.*

ii. On the other hand, there are certain nutrients we should limit (5% or below): *fat, cholesterol, and sodium.*

f. Let’s practice interpreting the food label using this information.

i. Which nutrients on the label have high values? *Fat, sodium, and calcium.* In this case, it’s good that calcium is high, but not as good that fat and sodium are.

ii. Which nutrients have low values? *Vitamin A, vitamin C, and iron.* We could benefit from high values of these nutrients.

iii. What nutrient does this food lack? *Dietary fiber.* Dietary fiber is a nutrient we would like to see a high value for. **Ask the participants:** Why do we want to see a high value for fiber? **Answer** – Because fiber is an important nutrient that is often lacking in most people’s diets. It aids in digestive and heart health so using products with higher amounts can help to meet daily needs.

g. **Ask the participants:** What do you know about the ingredients list? Following some answers from the audience: Ingredients are listed from the greatest to least amount in the food. When you look at the ingredients list, try to avoid foods with added sugars, especially near the top of the list!

i. **Ask the participants:** What do you see on this ingredient list that hints at the food being a healthy choice? “*Whole* wheat as the first ingredient”

4. **Label Reading Activity: How to choose a healthy snack**

a. Distribute food labels from popular snack foods to each participant. Participants may also choose to work in groups or
with their child if present. Also distribute a copy of the “Reading Nutrition Labels” handout.

b. Distribute and review the “Read it before you eat it” handout as a group.

c. Have the participants evaluate their food label based on calories, fat, and percent daily value per serving to determine if it is a healthy snack. Use the “Reading Nutrition Labels” worksheet.

d. Have the participants identify an alternative snack that would be healthier. What values would you look for improvement in?

e. Encourage participants to share their findings with the group.

5. Cooking Activity
   a. Tropical Smoothie Recipe
   b. Review the recipe. Provide each participant with a copy of the recipe. Encourage them to prepare it with their children at home.

V. Conclusion:
   A. Thank the participants for their time and answer any questions they may have.
   B. Distribute hand wipes.
   C. Provide each participant with a food tasting of the recipe prepared and encourage him or her to make small changes in his or her diet now. Explain why the food is a healthy option.
   D. Distribute caregiver handouts, including SNAP brochure and insert. Explain the purpose of SNAP.
   E. Distribute and explain reinforcements.
Tropical Smoothies

Yield: 3 servings

Ingredients:

1 medium banana
1 cup frozen mango chunks
1 cup canned pineapple chunks
½ cup fat free plain yogurt

Instructions:

1. In a blender or food processor, combine banana, mango, pineapple, and yogurt.
2. Puree until thick and smooth.
3. Pour into glasses and enjoy!

Notes: Fresh mango can be used instead in frozen. If using fresh mango, add ½ cup of ice cubes. If smoothie is too thick, add some juice from canned pineapple.

Source: Adapted from http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/recipe?IRID=827