



Sponsored by:
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Department of Family Medicine at Stony Brook Medical Center

Funded by:
The New York State Department of Health, Mary Lasker Heart and Hypertension Institute

NUTRITION UNIT

6TH GRADE

LESSON SEVEN - LUNCH DECISIONS

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be aware of guidelines regulating school lunch meals.
- Students will be able to identify pros and cons for buying lunch at school, bringing lunch from home and buying snack type foods for lunch.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Provided in the curriculum:
Lunch Debates worksheet

Other:

Sponsored by: *The Blue Waves Heart Links Project*
The Department of Family Medicine, SUNY Stony Brook
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Funded by: *The New York State Department of Health, Healthy Heart Program*

REVIEW

Have any advertisements caught your eye since our last class? What strategies did the advertisers use to try to get you to buy their product? Have you decided not to buy a product that you might have before, because you were able to decipher the advertisers' tricks?

INTRODUCTION

At lunch time you have a choice to buy the complete school lunch, bring a lunch from home, buy snack items or not eat at all. Next class we will talk about problems associated with skipping meals. so today we will concentrate on the other 3 options, especially what goes into planning school lunch meals.

Remind students that this is to be a positive discussion about lunch options and school lunch meals, and that unconstructive negative comments will not be tolerated.

Government agencies (especially the United States Department of Agriculture) are responsible for setting the rules that govern how school lunch meals are planned and what they include. The first law governing school lunch programs, the National School Lunch Program, was enacted in 1946. It insured that school lunch programs provided 1/3 of the nutrients (especially protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and calcium) students need each day. The program is based on requiring a given amount of food from 4 food groups: 2 ounces of meat or cheese (or 1 egg, 4 tablespoons peanut butter, 1/2 cup of beans), 8 ounces of milk, 3/4 cup of fruits and vegetables, and 1-1/2 to 2 servings of grains (a serving equals 1 slice of bread, 1/2 cup cooked rice or macaroni). More recently, the

The Blue Waves Heart Links Project

*Sponsored by: The Department of Family Medicine, SUNY Stony Brook
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County*

Funded by: The New York State Department of Health, Healthy Heart Program

National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program: School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children, was passed in 1994. The goal of this law is to require that schools provide the same nutrients as before, but with limits on the amount of fat, cholesterol, sugar and sodium. This requirement was added, because scientists have shown that too much of these substances, even in children's diets, can lead to an increased risk of heart disease, cancer and obesity later in life. These requirements insure that school lunch programs are consistent with the recommendations made with the Food Guide Pyramid. Managers of school lunch programs also have to consider what foods students will eat. Over the years, students have gotten used to more fast food type meals (hamburgers, chicken nuggets, French fries) and are less likely to choose mixed dishes or casserole type dishes. This is unfortunate, because these types of meals are usually lower in fat and higher in vitamins and minerals.

The quality of lunches brought from home varies a lot. There are obviously no regulations regarding meals brought from home, and it is usually based on students' and parents' food preferences. Ask students what type of lunches they bring from home. Have them consider the ingredients in the lunch and where these foods can be found in the Food Guide Pyramid. Are these foods low fat, low sugar and low sodium selections from these food groups? What can they add more of, or use less of, to make these lunches healthier?

Ask students if they ever bought snack type foods for lunch instead of the complete school meal. What types of snacks did they buy? Where would these foods be found in the Food Guide Pyramid?

The Blue Waves Heart Links Project

*Sponsored by: The Department of Family Medicine, SUNY Stony Brook
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County*

Funded by: The New York State Department of Health, Healthy Heart Program

ACTIVITY

LUNCH DEBATES

Divide the class into 3 groups: School Lunchers, Brown Baggers, and Snackers. Students should work together to address the debate items for their group. Students should consider both positive and negative aspects of each debate item. However, students should be reminded that negative comments have to be phrased in a constructive manner. After students have completed the worksheet, have a class discussion by bringing up each debate item and letting each group read their comments. Use the following points to lead the discussion:

1. Foods in the complete school lunch meals are from the grain, fruit, vegetable, meat and milk groups, as this is required by law. There may be some additional foods from the tip of the pyramid, such as butter or margarine. Foods from lunches brought from home vary a lot because there are no rules governing meals prepared from home. Parents and students are free to pick the foods. Lunches brought from home are likely to include grains (bread) and meats (turkey, ham, tunafish, etc.). Ask students if lunches they bring from home include fruits or vegetables. How many buy milk to go with their lunch? Snack foods are likely to be from the tip of the Pyramid, and provide few vitamins, minerals and nutrients, but a lot of fat, sugar and sodium.
2. Students should consider if their peers encourage them to select a particular type of lunch option. Does this prevent them from choosing a lunch option that they would otherwise prefer? How can they defy this peer pressure?

3. Ask students how much they spend on school lunch and/or snack foods. Students will probably have a difficult time quantifying how much a lunch from home costs. Cost depends, on course, of the foods selected. You can ask students to check with the adult in the house who does the food shopping and report back next class. Students should also consider if they get a lot of food for their money. Does it fill them up or leave them hungry?

4. Students should consider how the options taste. Remind students that taste is a very individual and personal attribute, and they should only make statements from their perspective. For example, I prefer the taste of lunches I bring from home compared to school lunch meals.

5. Ask students if they have seen advertisements for the snack foods available in the cafeteria, for the foods they use in making the lunches from home, or for the foods included in school lunches. After finishing the last lesson on advertisements, do students believe these advertisements, or lack of advertisements, influence the foods they choose for lunch?

CONCLUSIONS

- Buying a school lunch or bringing a lunch from home can be nutritious and inexpensive.
- By law, school lunches have to provide at least one third of the nutrients students need in a day, without too much fat, sugar and sodium.

(Continued on the next page.)

- Buying just snack foods for lunch is expensive. These foods have little nutritional value, and are high in fats, sugar and/or sodium.