



Nutrition Label Scavenger Hunt

Written by GEF Staff

Grades: PreK-2

Subjects: Science, Health

Time: 45 minutes



***Standards:** Students will...

Health Standard 6: Understand the essential concepts about nutrition and diet.

Benchmark 1: Classify foods and food combinations according to food groups.

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Understand that nutrition food labels give important information about food items and can be found on the side or back of food containers.
- Know that different foods have different nutritional values
- Identify words commonly found on nutrition labels (sodium, calories, sugar, calcium, fiber and fat)

Materials:

- Variety of packaged food items
- Index cards with important nutrition label words such as: calories, fat, sugar, fiber etc.
- Buckets or baskets
- Various jars, cans, and boxes containing nutrition labels
- Food Pyramid Basics
- Daily Recommendations Chart

Overview: These are important words to consider when reading a food nutrition label.

Sodium: It is an essential nutrient but very little needs to be added to your diet. No more than 1500-2300 mg of sodium a day will help lower risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. However, there is not really a one-size-fits-all recommendation. Sodium intake depends on family history, age and medical conditions. To help cut back on sodium, read food nutrition labels and choose foods low in sodium. Major sources of sodium are processed foods such as tomato sauce, soups, condiments, canned foods, and prepared mixes. When cooking flavor food with herbs and spices instead of salt.

Calories: The values reflect the needs of a moderately active (about 1 hr/day) children within each age range. Inactive children need somewhat fewer calories and active children will need more calories. students ages four to eight years of age need about 1400-1600 calories a day.

Sugar: Added sugars are sugars and syrups that are added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation. This does not include naturally occurring sugars such as those that occur in milk and fruits. Physically active students aged four to eight have an estimated discretionary calorie allowance of 170-195 calories a day. Foods that contain most of the added sugars in American diets are: regular soft drinks, candy, cakes, cookies, pies, fruit drinks, milk-based desserts and products, such as ice cream, sweetened yogurt and sweetened milk and grain products such as sweet rolls and cinnamon toast.

Reading the ingredient label on processed foods can help to identify added sugars. Names for added sugars on food labels include: brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup.

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Fiber: Whole grains are healthy choices because they are high in fiber. Fiber lowers cholesterol levels, aids the digestive system, helps maintain a healthy weight, and helps prevent certain diseases. Each day at least half of your grains should be whole grains. Students ages four to eight years of age need about 19 -23 grams of fiber a day.

Fats: Oils are fats at room temperature. Most oils are high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats, and low in saturated fats. When choosing fats, unsaturated fats are your best bet. These include monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. One type of polyunsaturated fat, omega-3 fatty acids can benefit your heart. Less healthy kinds of fats saturated and trans fats (trans-fatty acids) are. They can increase your risk of heart disease. Here are some examples of unsaturated and saturated fats.

- Monounsaturated fat: Olive oil, peanut oil, canola oil, avocados, nuts and seeds
- Polyunsaturated fat: Vegetable oils (such as safflower, corn, sunflower, soy and cottonseed oils), nuts and seeds
- Omega-3 fatty acids: Fatty, cold-water fish (such as salmon, mackerel and herring), flaxseeds, flax oil and walnuts
- Saturated fat: Animal products (such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products, lard and butter), and coconut, palm and other tropical oils
- Trans fat: Partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, commercial baked goods (such as crackers, cookies and cakes), fried foods (such as doughnuts and french fries), shortening and margarine

Kid's Speak: Nutrition food labels give important information about food items. They can be found on the side or back of packages, cans, or jars of food. Some words such as sodium, calories, sugar, calcium, fiber and fat are commonly found on nutrition labels.

Eco-Fact: Food labeling is required for most prepared foods, such as breads, cereals, canned and frozen foods, snacks, desserts, drinks. However, nutrition labeling for raw produce (fruits and vegetables) and fish is voluntary.

Procedures:

1. Prior to conducting the activity arrange food items around the room, like an Easter egg hunt. It could be the snacks and drinks for the day or other food items.
2. Discuss what a nutrition label is and why it is important. Show students jars, cans, and boxes containing nutrition labels. Read some words you see on the nutrition label. In the *Overview* above some helpful resources to explain the words found on the nutrition labels can be found.
3. Show the students the flash cards with words found on the nutrition label. As you show a card, have students sound the words, or draw the words in the air with their fingers to help them become familiar with the word.
4. Provide students with a bucket or basket. Have the group stand up and be ready to search room for hidden food items. Students can search alone or in pairs.
5. Instruct students to find items with nutrition labels that are hidden around the room. The first person to find an item can place it in their basket. Continue the search until all food items have been found by students.
6. Gather the group together again. Then hold up one of the flash cards and sound out the word for them. Students should look on the nutrition label to find that word. Briefly explain the meaning of that word.
7. Hold up another flash card and continue the process until all the nutrition words have been identified on nutrition label.



Wrap Up/Discussion:

Conduct a wrap up discussion.

- Review the location on the package and importance of nutrition labels on food items.
 - Review some words (sodium, calories, sugar, calcium, fiber and fat) commonly found on nutrition labels.
- Ask students to give any information they can about those words.

Adaptations:

For older children spend more time and provide more details about the words found on the nutrition label.

Extensions:

Check out other nutrition lessons on this site.

[My Great Big Food Pyramid](#)

[Food Pyramid Relay Race](#)

[You are What You Eat](#)

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The Food Pyramid Basics

Orange Section on the USDA Food Pyramid

Grain

The USDA recommends six servings or six ounces from the Grain Group daily.

What foods are in the Grain Group?
Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product.

Grains are divided into two subgroups, **whole grains** and **refined grains**.

Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel – the bran, germ, and endosperm. Whole grains are healthy choices because they are high in fiber. Fiber lowers cholesterol levels, aids the digestive system, helps maintain a healthy weight, and helps prevent certain diseases. Make at least half of your grains whole every day! Examples of whole grains include:

- Whole wheat flour
- Whole wheat crackers
- Whole wheat pasta
- Bulgur (cracked wheat)
- Oatmeal
- Whole cornmeal
- Brown rice

Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ. This is done to give grain a finer texture and improve their shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron, and many B vitamins. Some examples of refined grain products are:

- White flour
- White bread
- White rice

Most refined grains are enriched. This means certain B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid) and iron are added back after processing. Fiber is not added back to enriched grains. Check the ingredient list on refined grain products to make sure that the word "enriched" is included in the grain name. Some food products are made from mixtures of whole grains and refined grains.

Source: <http://www.myplate.gov/grains/>

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Daily Recommendations Chart

Calorie recommendations are based on a child's age, sex, height, weight, and activity level. To reflect this variability, the Nutrient Recommendations by Age in the table below are given as a range for some nutrients.

Nutrient	DV	Nutrient Recommendations by Age (DRIs)*				
		2-3 years	4-8 years	9-13 years	14-18 yr girls	14-18 yr boys
Protein (grams)	50	13	19	34	48	52
Fat (gms)	65	7	12	26	65	78
Cholesterol (mg)	300	0	0	0	0	0
Total Fat (gms)	65	30-54	38-62	62-88	65-70	81-95
Saturated Fat (gms)	20	12-18 (> age 2)	16-18 (> age 2)	18-22 (> age 2)	22 (> age 2)	24-27 (> age 2)
Calories**	2000	1000-1400 (2-3 years)	1400-1800	1800-2200 girls, 1800-2200 boys	2000	2200-2400

DRIs: 1999 - 2002 Dietary Reference Intakes, Institutes of Medicine 2005 Dietary Guidelines

Source: USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center of Baylor College of Medicine

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