

Snacking and the Media: Three Days of Activities

Background:

Youth of all ages spend a large amount of their leisure time using a combination of various media including television, video games, the internet, etc. Exposure to these media affects their choices and may have a strong influence on their tendency toward increased obesity and chronic disease risk. Television advertising can especially affect young people's food and nutrition-related knowledge and purchase decisions, both those made directly and indirectly through their parents.¹

Goal:

To increase consumption of healthy snacks, particularly those including fruits or vegetables, so you will have focused, ready-to-learn, mindful students in the classroom.

Objective:

By the end of March 2007, your students will be more aware of the influence that the media has on their purchase decisions, and they will also be able to state which snacks are the healthiest and why.

Materials (provided):

1. **Smart Snacking** Poster (one for each classroom)
2. Pineapple for Taste Test (one taste for each student)
3. **Be Smart, Snack Smart** Wristbands (one for each student)
4. Berkeley Media Studies DVD: **Fighting Junk Food Marketing to Kids** (one for each classroom)
5. CanFit Handout: **Are YOU Gettin' Played by Ronald McDonald?** (ten copies for each classroom)
6. Washington Post Article: **Kraft to Curb Snack-Food Advertising** (ten copies for each classroom)

Time You Will Need in the Classroom:

Approximately 20 - 30 minutes each day.

ACTIVITIES	Basic Educational Standards
<p>First Day</p> <p>Go over smart snacking talking points. Instruct students to pay close attention to snack foods and beverage advertisements during the rest of the day and at home. For the rest of the week, ask students to bring in the packages/wrappers of snack foods, both healthy and unhealthy, that they regularly buy.</p>	<p>English Language Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and Speaking 1.0 Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications • Reading Comprehension 2.0 Expository Critique <p>Health Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School Standards 3, 7, & 9
<p>Second Day</p> <p>Pass out pineapple for taste testing. Introduce concepts of both the media's influence and media literacy using the definition of media literacy and the media facts. Watch DVD and initiate related discussion with class.</p>	
<p>Third Day</p> <p>Have students read both the CanFit and Washington Post articles. Discuss healthy and unhealthy snack choices and related marketing. Distribute wristbands to students who have participated.</p>	

Action You Need to Take:

Sign up with your Nutrition Site Coordinator so we can provide the materials you will need.

¹ Drawn from *Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance*, 2005. Institute of Medicine. Available at: www.iom.edu



Day 1: Smart Snacking Talking Points

Importance of Snacking

Post the *Smart Snacking* poster, distribute the *Smart Snacking* handouts, and engage students in a 10-minute discussion on the importance of snacking and smart snacking.

- Snacks are an important way to keep your body fueled. Remember breakfast - “breaking the fast” - well, think of snacks as “mini-meals.”
- Snacks are an important source of nutrients: especially for adolescents who are still growing.
- Snacks should be healthy, fun, and easy.
- Smart snacking is about choosing snacks that are better than others.

Good snack choices and why:

Eat More of These:	WHY?	Eat Less of These:	WHY?
Pretzels or baked chips	Baked is healthier (vs. fried)	Chips/Cheetos	Fried in bad fat (hydrogenated) and high in saturated fats
Fruit and vegetables	High in vitamins, minerals, fiber and low in fat	Fruit flavored candy or fruit flavored drinks	High in sugar, no vitamins or minerals
Low fat yogurt and frozen yogurt	Less fat	Ice cream	High in fat
Toasted corn tortillas	Less fat	Corn chips	High in fat
Water, vegetable juice, and 100% fruit juice	High in vitamins and minerals	Soda, horchata	No vitamins and minerals, and high in added sugar
Low sugar cereal (10 grams per serving), plain popcorn, and whole grain crackers	Higher in vitamins and minerals, fiber, and low fat	Cookies, sweet breads, pastries	Low in nutrients and high in fat & sugar

Ask the students:

- ✓ What is your favorite snack?
 - Do you think it is healthy?
 - What might be a better choice?

Day 2: Media Literacy (review as necessary)

a. **What is Media Literacy?** : “Media literacy is the ability to access, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and use all forms of media from direct mail pieces to newspaper articles and television advertisements to internet content. Media literacy includes understanding that because different people interpret messages in different ways, the media often change their message about the same product or issue to fit their intended audience.”²

b. Media Facts

- Students aged 11 to 14 spend an average of 6 hours and 45 minutes a day using media (TV, computer, magazines, etc.). This is more time than they spend doing anything else except sleeping.³
- According to the Institute of Medicine, “More than half of television advertisements directed at young people promote food and beverages such as candy, fast food, snack foods, soft drinks and sweetened breakfast cereals that are high in calories and fat and low in fiber and essential nutrients.”

² National Middle School Association’s Classroom Connection, October 2001. Available at: http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article562.html

³ Media Awareness Network. Available at: <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm>

- "Academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than 10 hours a week of TV, according to the report "[Strong Families, Strong Schools](#)," from the U.S. Department of Education, December 1994.
- Sixth and 12th grade California students who were heavy viewers of TV scored lower on reading, written expression and math achievement tests than students who viewed little or no television. ([Judith Van Evra](#), Television and Child Development, p. 53.)

c. DVD on Marketing

- Watch the *Fighting Junk Food Marketing to Kids* DVD and follow with discussion questions. The entire run time of the DVD is approximately 14 minutes. If pressed for time, chapters one through three have a combined run time of only 6 minutes and are also the most relevant chapters on the DVD.

Discussion Questions⁴

1. What new marketing tactics did you learn about?
2. What surprised you?
3. What do you think motivates the food and beverage industries to target youth and children?
4. What examples of child or youth target marketing have you seen lately?
5. What examples of ethnic aimed target marketing can you think of?
6. How do you feel about this?
7. Which of these types of marketing do you think you and your family and friends are most influenced by?
8. Should there be rules about marketing to foods and beverages to kids? What should the rules be?
9. What do you think of the possible solutions profiled in the video?
10. What changes would you like to see happen around junk food marketing in your community?

Day 3: How does the media influence our snack food choices?

- a. Have class read aloud both the CanFit and the Washington Post articles and discuss either in small groups or as a class:
- b. Have class share snack packages/wrappers that they have brought in.

Discussion Questions:

1. Think about the example snack products that the class has brought in:
 - a. How often do you buy snacks like this?
 - b. What message do you think the marketers are trying to convey about their products?
 - c. What tactics did the marketers use to get you or your friends to buy these products? (i.e. food placement; celebrity endorsement; appealing words like “energy” or “strong”, etc.)
2. Do you think it’s fair for food companies to advertise unhealthy foods to young people? Why or why not?

⁴ Excerpted from Berkeley Media Studies Group’s Toolkit for Advocates.