



## The Low-Down on Snacks



### **Key Concepts:**

- There are different types of fats. Some fats are healthier than others.
- A diet that is high in fat and sodium increases the risk of developing some diseases such as heart disease and high blood pressure.
- Choosing nutritious, low-fat and low-sodium snacks contributes to a healthy diet.
- Reading Nutrition Facts Labels can help consumers make informed food choices.

### **Materials/Equipment Needed:**

- Shortening
- Death of an Artery Model
- Canola (or other vegetable) oil
- Margarine package that contains trans fat
- ¼ teaspoon of salt labeled in a zip top plastic bag
- 1 teaspoon of salt labeled in a zip top plastic bag
- 2 ½ teaspoons of salt labeled in a zip top plastic bag
- Sodium pie chart
- Variety of snack food packages with the Nutrition Facts Label
- Grocery bag
- Tent cards – one with the word “high” and one with the word “low”
- Healthy Snacks Poster Exhibits (Snack Bites and Snack Attack)
- Educational Fact Sheets (Nutrition Facts Label Help! – LSU AgCenter Publication 3025 and The Scoop on Healthy Snacking – LSU AgCenter Publication 3033)
- “Read It Before You Eat It” worksheets
- Pencils or pens
- 2 tables with table cloths

### **Advanced Preparation:**

- Review activity instructions.
- Check number of fact sheets and worksheets to make sure you have enough and make copies if needed.
- Have all needed materials available at the station.
- Set up accompanying poster exhibits.
- Put several snack food packages into a grocery bag.
- Set up tent cards at opposite ends of the table.

**Talking Points:** Show label that gives daily values for fat, saturated fat and sodium to put these talking points into perspective.

- Is snacking okay? (Yes!) Growing kids need energy and nutrients that can come from healthy snacks. Snacks can help fill in the gaps to aid in getting the recommended servings from each food group on MyPyramid. Eating snacks that are high in fat, sugar and sodium may give you a temporary boost of energy, but in the long run, they will slow you down. Nutritious snacks can be an important part of a healthy diet. Let's look at some ways to tell if your snack is a healthy choice:
  - Is it low in fat and sodium? Choose most often snack foods that are lower in total fat, saturated fat, trans fat and sodium (or salt). We'll talk about this more in a minute. Watch out for fried snack foods. Try baked instead.
  - Is it low in sugar? Check the ingredients list as well as the Nutrition Facts Label. This list tells you everything that is in your food. Ingredients are listed from the largest quantity to the smallest quantity by weight. Whatever ingredient your food has the most of will be first on the list. If sugar is one of the first two ingredients, the food is high in sugar.
  - Is it high in fiber or a whole grain food? Snack foods that are a good source of fiber are whole wheat foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grain cereals.
  - Is it full of vitamins and minerals? Look for snacks that are good sources of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.
- Fats are the most concentrated source of calories. Some fats have been associated with the development of heart disease and other serious illnesses. Although a high intake of fat has been associated with the development of some diseases, certain types of fat are needed for good health. We need to find a balance in our food choices between "good" and "bad" fats. There are different types of fats.
  - Saturated fats are usually solid or almost solid at room temperature. (Show example of shortening.) These fats introduce cholesterol into the body which may increase the risk of heart disease. As cholesterol and fat

build up in the arteries, it becomes harder and harder for the heart to pump blood throughout the body. (Show Death of an Artery Model.) Saturated fat is mainly found in animal products such as meat, poultry and whole-fat milk and milk products like cheese, butter and cream. Many fast foods are also high in saturated fats.

- Unsaturated fats can be either monounsaturated or polyunsaturated. These fats are usually liquid or soft at room temperature. (Show example of canola oil.) Unsaturated fats may lower cholesterol levels which can help reduce the risk of heart disease.
  - Trans fats are created when oils are “partially hydrogenated” to turn liquid oils into solid margarine or shortening. One example of creating a trans fat would be when a liquid oil is turned into solid margarine. (Show margarine package that contains trans fat.) Trans fat contributes to high blood cholesterol levels and can increase the risk of heart disease.
- Sodium is a mineral that is needed for life. It is important for maintaining proper fluid balance in the body and assists in nerve transmission and muscle contraction. However, if we eat too much sodium (or salt) we can have an increased risk for developing high blood pressure. Our bodies only really need about 500 milligrams of sodium a day to replace the salt lost each day. This equals to less than ¼ teaspoon of salt. (Show ¼ teaspoon of salt.) It is recommended that adults consume not more than 2,300 mg of sodium each day. This is about the amount in one teaspoon of salt. (Show 1 teaspoon of salt.) For kids ages 9 to 13, the recommendation is 2,200 mg of sodium each day. The average American eats way more than what is recommended. Can you guess how many milligrams of sodium the average person eats in a day? (It is 6,000. This is about 2 ½ teaspoons of salt – show 2 ½ teaspoons of salt.) Of the sodium that the average person eats each day 15% comes from the salt shaker, 10% occurs naturally in foods and 75% is in processed foods like lunch meats, bacon, sausage and canned foods. (Show pie chart.)
  - The Nutrition Facts label is a great aid to help you make healthy choices. One easy tool to help you make comparisons is known as the 5 and 20 Rule. Foods with 5% Daily Value or less for fat and sodium contribute a small amount, while foods with 20% Daily Value or more for fat and sodium contribute a large amount. This rule applies for the other nutrients as well. The Nutrition Facts label gives the serving size for the food and then shows the amount of calories and nutrients for that serving size. The % Daily Value shows how the amounts of the nutrients listed fit into your overall diet based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

**Activity:** We are going to look at the Nutrition Facts label on some common snack foods to see which ones would be the better choices. We are going to be looking at the fat and sodium contents of these foods. Let’s start out with a guessing game first to see how well you can determine which foods would be high or low in sodium without looking at the label first.

- Activity 1: The Low-Down on Fat – Show participants a variety of snack food packages with the Nutrition Facts Label. Ask them to put them in order of total fat content from the lowest amount to the highest without reading the

Nutrition Facts Label. After they put them in order, read the Nutrition Facts Label to see if they were correct and put them in the correct order based on fat content. Ask if they were surprised at the fat content of some of the foods.

- Activity 2: Shake Up the Grocery Bag – Set up tent cards at opposite ends of the table – one will say LOW and the other will say HIGH. Fill a grocery bag with a variety of snack food packages containing the Nutrition Facts label. Have participants reach into the grocery bag and take out a snack package. Participants should look at the Nutrition Facts Label and use the 5 and 20 Rule to determine if the food is high or low in sodium. If they think the food is high, they should place it in front of the tent card that says “high”. If they think it is low, they should place it in front of the tent card that says “low”. If it falls in the middle, they should place it in between depending upon whether it should be closer to high, low or in the middle. After all of the packages have been placed, go over the labels and whether they were placed correctly or not. Discuss why some snacks were higher in sodium than others.
  
- Activity 3: Read It Before You Eat It – Pass out “Read It Before You Eat It” worksheets and a snack food package with the Nutrition Facts Label for the participants. Families can work as a group to complete this activity. Have participants answer the questions on the worksheet based on the Nutrition Facts Label of the food package.

**Summary:** A healthful snack can provide important energy and nutrients for you. When choosing snacks watch out for the fat, sodium and sugar content of foods. Read the Nutrition Facts label to compare the % Daily Value for fat and sodium. Choose foods with a lower % Daily Value for these nutrients. Keep the 5 and 20 Rule in mind. Choose foods with little or no trans fats and keep cholesterol intake as low as possible. To reduce your fat intake, you can limit your use of solid or saturated fats like butter and stick margarine, avoid fried foods, choose low-fat milk products, choose lean meats and poultry without skin and read the Nutrition Facts Label to compare the fat content of foods. To reduce the sodium in your diet, limit your intake of processed foods, choose canned foods without added salt, choose fresh or frozen vegetables more often, don’t add salt at the table and read the Nutrition Facts Label to choose foods with lower levels of sodium. Think of snacks as mini meals and make them count by choosing nutritious foods that will help you get your servings needed from MyPyramid each day.

<b>References</b>	Empowering Youth with Nutrition and Physical Activity, USDA Team Nutrition
	Team Nutrition Family Nutrition Nights: Looking at Health Through Science and Math
	The Power of Choice Helping Youth Make Healthy Eating and Fitness Decisions, USDA Team Nutrition
	Smart Choices Youth Lessons, LSU AgCenter

<b>Background Resources</b> (Sources of Additional Information for the Presenter if Needed)	American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide
	LSU AgCenter – <a href="http://www.lsuagcenter.com">www.lsuagcenter.com</a>
	Smart Choices Youth Fact Sheet "Nutrition Facts Label Help!" (LSU AgCenter Publication #3025)
	Smart Choices Youth Fact Sheet "The Scoop on Healthy Snacking" (LSU AgCenter Publication #3033)
	MyPyramid – <a href="http://www.mypyramid.gov">www.mypyramid.gov</a>

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