

Lesson 3.4: Eat-out or Take-out: Make Healthy Choices!

Background (Read before you teach):

People who eat out more often, especially at fast food restaurants, are more likely to be overweight (USDA, 2016). However, families can enjoy an occasional meal away from home and still make healthy choices, including more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. [Making healthy choices](#) involves cutting back on foods and beverages that are high in calories, saturated fat, added sugar, and sodium (USDA, 2016).

The US Department of Agriculture Choose [MyPlate](#) website (USDA, 2016) provides useful tips on eating out. Key tips include the following:

- What to choose: Compare calories on menu and order lower calorie foods. Choose dishes with more vegetables, fruit, whole grains, lean protein, and/or low-fat dairy food. Ask for water or lower-fat milk to drink;
- How much to choose: Choose smaller portions (avoid the largest servings) or share dishes. Order from the menu rather than the all-you-can-eat buffet; and
- How foods are prepared: Choose steamed, grilled, or broiled dishes, rather than fried foods or dishes with creamy or cheese sauces. Ask for salad dressings on the side.

In Mexican-origin families, acculturation is associated with more frequent consumption of hamburgers, pizzas, fries, and sodas among young children (Kaiser et al., 2015; Vera-Becerra, Lopez, & Kaiser, 2016). On the other hand, parents play a key role in selecting healthy foods, modeling good eating habits, and providing daily structure to support good nutrition.

Since many families also order take-out foods or buy frozen prepared foods to eat at home, the messages are really about making healthy choices, regardless of where the food is finally eaten.

Teaching Tip: This lesson reviews and builds on concepts in the Read the Label, MyPlate, and Reduce Sugary Beverage lessons. If the educator has information on typical food choices from recalls or other dietary tools, pictures of those foods can be included in the activity. Calorie and nutrient content of foods and beverages can be found in the US Department of Agriculture nutrient database (Calorie needs, which vary by age, gender and activity level, can be found in the [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)).

Target Audience: Latino families with young children, ages 3 to 8 years

Key Message: Make healthy choices when eating out or choosing take-out food

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify the amount of calories in a serving on a food label; and
- Choose healthier options when eating out

Materials: paper, pencils, and markers; 4-5 pairs of food labels for similar foods; pictures of typical food choices; (optional) 3-4 calculators; MyPlate poster; food and other supplies for food demonstration (suggested Chicken Chow Mein).

Handouts: recipes, food score cards

Set-up: Prepare picture cards of typical food choices with calories per portion on backside (see Table 1). Prepare one set for every group of 3 participants. Put one set of cards and score cards for each group into large envelope or paper clip together for ease.

Table 1: Comparison of fast food, take-out, and other food choices

Food or Beverage	Portion size/description	Calories/nutrients	MyPlate Groups
Double cheeseburger, plain on bun	2 meat patties, 1 bun, ketchup, cheese	4499 calories 12 g saturated fat 5g added sugar 1092 mg sodium	2 oz protein; 1 1/2 oz grain, 1 cup dairy, ¼ cup vegetable
Hamburger, ketchup and	1 meat patty, 1 bun	346calories 5 g saturated fat	1 1/2 oz protein, 2 oz grain, ¼ cup vegetable,

mayonnaise, on bun		4 g added sugar 569 mg sodium	
Pizza	1/8 slice of 12 inch pizza, meat and vegetables, regular crust	272 calories 5 g saturated fat 1 g added sugar 657 mg sodium	¼ cup dairy, 2 oz grain, ¼ cup vegetable; ½ oz protein
Soft taco	Tortilla, beans, lettuce, cheese, and salsa	224 calories 3 g saturated fat 0 g added sugar 605 mg sodium	1 ½ oz grain, ½ cup vegetable, ¼ cup dairy
Nachos (supreme)	Chips, beef, beans, sour cream, tomatoes, cheese	421 calories 6 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 630 mg sodium	2 1/2 oz grains, 1/4 cup dairy, 1/4 cup vegetable, ½ oz protein
Salad, chicken	1-Grilled chicken, cheese, lettuce, tomato, no dressing	202 calories 6 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 630 mg sodium	2 1/2 cup vegetable, ¼ cup dairy, 2 ½ oz protein
Enchilada	1 --With chicken, cheese, red sauce	164 calories 2 gm saturated fat	1 oz grain, 1/4 cup vegetable; ¼ cup dairy; 1 oz protein

		0 gm added sugar 350 mg sodium	
Fried chicken	1 medium breast, fried in oil, breaded	364 calories 3 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 697 mg sodium	1 oz grain; 3 ½ oz protein
French fries	1 supersized order	608 calories 5 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 410 mg sodium	1 ¼ cup vegetable
French fries	1 small order	265 calories 2 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 179 mg sodium	1/2 cup vegetable
Garden salad	1 cup lettuce, tomato, carrots, no dressing	15 calories 0 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 22 mg sodium	¾ cup vegetable
Salad, Caesar	1 cup lettuce, crumbs, cheese, chicken, dressing	184 calories 3 gm saturated fat 1 gm added sugar 280 mg sodium	½ oz grain; ¾ cup vegetable; ¼ cup dairy; 1/2 oz protein
Milk shake	20 oz, chocolate	603 calories 11 gm saturated fat	1 ¾ cup dairy

		63 gm sugar 461 mg sodium	
Ice cream	1 medium scoop	137 calories 4 gm saturated fat 11 gm added sugar 53 mg sodium	¼ cup dairy
Apple sauce	1 cup, sweetened	173 calories 0 gm saturated fat 13 gm added sugar 5 mg sodium	1 cup fruit
Chocolate milk, whole	1 cup	208 calories 5 gm saturated fat 10 gm added sugar 150 mg sodium	1 cup dairy
Plain milk, low fat	1 cup	102 calories 2 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 107 mg sodium	1 cup dairy
Apple juice	1 cup	114 calories 0 gm saturated fat 0 gm added sugar 10 mg sodium	1 cup fruit
Soft drink, regular Cola	44 oz	501 calories 0 gm saturated fat	0

		116 gm added sugar 54 gm sodium	
Soft drink, small	16 oz	182 calories 0 gm saturated fat 42 gm added sugar 20 mg sodium	0
Water, plain	12 oz	0	0

Source: USDA Food composition database (April 2018) <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list>

Note: Beans can either be counted as vegetable or protein foods

Opening (Anchor): (10 min) Welcome! Review what was covered last time and ask if participants have made changes, based on their goals. Congratulate and encourage them to keep on making changes.

Today, we will be talking about how to make healthy food and beverage choices while eating out and buying prepared foods away from home.

To begin the class, hand out paper and markers. Ask participants to draw a picture of what a healthy body looks like inside (or how you feel after eating a healthy meal). Ask them to draw another picture of an unhealthy body (or how you feel when you eat a lot of unhealthy foods).

Ask: How do you feel when you eat healthy foods? Unhealthy foods?

Lesson (Add): (10 min) Discuss the following points:

- (Review) **Say:** In a previous lesson, we talked about reading food labels to make better food choices. In small groups of 2-3 participants, hand out two different labels of similar foods to compare. **Ask:** Which item has fewer calories? If you were at the grocery store, which item would you buy? Why would you buy that item?
- **Ask:** Why is it useful to look at the calories in foods when making choices?

Summarize: Calories tell us how much energy is in the food (or beverage). We use energy just like a car uses fuel/gas to run. We need energy for all body functions, like breathing, digesting food, or moving around.

To stay at a healthy weight over time, adults have to eat or drink foods with the same amount of calories that they use (for example, as in physical activity). Since children are growing, they need to eat or drink foods that cover their basic energy needs and allow for a healthy (normal) weight gain.

If the amount of calories (energy) we eat and drink exceeds the amount of calories we burn (or use), the body stores this excess energy as fat. Over time, consuming too many calories, compared to what the body uses, can lead to overweight. Overweight, unhealthy diet, and lack of physical activity increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Ask: How can we find out how many calories are in food?

Read food labels on packages

Many restaurants have brochures or menu boards

Larger restaurants (e.g. fast food restaurants chains) must have the information available

Activity (Apply): (30 min) While the assistant starts the food demonstration, the educator leads the activity.

- **Fast Food Game:** Divide participants into groups of 3-4 people. Pass out a set of pictures, score cards, and pencils. **Say:** Let's have a contest! I will give you 10 minutes to choose foods and beverages for a mid-day meal. The goal is to see which group can plan a meal that meets more of the food group needs but with the fewest calories. Write your food and beverage choices on the score card. After creating a meal, look at the back of the pictures and add up food calories and food groups. You will be allowed to substitute healthier choices until time is up.
- Allow groups to share their meals. **Ask:** How many calories are in the meal you selected? **Ask:** how does your meal compare to My Plate? What food groups are included? Note: for comparison, the food score card shows the number of calories and food groups that might be appropriate for an adult female, about 30 years old, who gets 30 minutes or less of physical activity a day. Most school children need fewer calories; young men who are very active need more.
- Food demonstration, tasting and sharing. Pass around the containers, showing the participants any foods that might be new or unfamiliar (for example, low-fat products, whole grain alternatives). Explain step-by-step how the food is prepared. Serve samples for tasting. **Ask:** What are some ways that your children can help prepare this recipe? How can you use it at home? What do you like about the recipe? What would you change?

Closing (Away): (10 min) Pair-up and set specific goals.

What did you learn? Why is this information important to you? How will you share this information with your spouse, children, or other family members? Choose a goal to work on this month (week). Try to choose a simple goal that is doable within a month (week). For example, "The next time we go out to eat, we will ask for water to drink instead of soda" or "Next time I dine out, I will split my meal and share it with another member of my family". Write your goal in the recipe handout. Invite families to share their goals. Ask a friend or family member to support you in reaching your goal.

References and Resources:

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