Y Detectives
Family Activity

FAMILY ACTIVITY: FOOD LABEL DETECTIVES

You're staring groggily at your box of Frosted Whatchamacallits. Your eyes land on the food label. Does 1 cup really contain 19 grams of sugar? And what are maltodextrin and sodium hexametaphosphate anyway? Nutrition Facts food labels offer important information, but only if we know how to read them. This activity will help youth and their family members use food labels to make healthier food choices.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Materials
- A Tale of Two Foods handout
- Pen or pencil
- Food labels (see end of document or use labels from food that you have at home)

Instructions
Introduction to Food Labels and Processed Foods
1. Ask youth what a food label is
2. Share information about food labels
   
   Food labels are located on the back of most foods that we eat and give us information about what ingredients are in the food and what nutrients the food provides us with.

3. Ask youth what processed versus unprocessed foods are
4. Share information about processed versus unprocessed foods

   Unprocessed foods are foods that come from the farm or garden to our plate with very few steps in between. Unprocessed foods are foods like fruits and vegetables, rice, and plain oatmeal.

   Processed foods are foods that have many steps between where they are grown and our plates. Between the farm and our plates, lots of things are added to these foods like extra salt, sugar, flavorings, colors and things to keep the foods fresh. The things that are added aren’t always good for our health.

A Tale of Two Foods
1. Explain that youth will be comparing two food labels to see which food is less processed.
2. Distribute Tale of Two Foods worksheet, writing utensils, and food labels
3. Instruct youth to fill out the worksheet using their food labels
4. Reflect
   - Which food is the least processed? How can you tell?
   - What do you think about putting processed foods or ingredients that you don’t know about into your body?
   - How can we work to eat fewer processed foods? How might this be easy? How might this be hard?

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE
1. Where do you see food labels? How often do you read them? Do your family members read them?

2. What kind of information can you get from a food label?

3. What are some ways that food companies use words and pictures on packaging to catch your eye and encourage you to buy the food? How can a food label help you figure out what is really in the food?

**IDEAS TO INCLUDE YOUNGER SIBLINGS! (ADAPTATIONS FOR 0-5 YEAR OLDS)**

- Little ones who are just starting to identify numbers and letters can look at labels to go on a hunt for letters in their name or in the names of people they know and love. They may recognize numbers too.
- Talk with children about the purpose of labels and where they may see them elsewhere to make connections to their current experiences. For example, in most preschool classrooms children will see and use labels that identify where toys belong at clean up time. They also use labels for their cubbies and different play areas of the classroom. For toddlers, those labels will also include pictures which is helping to build the connection between pictures, real items and words.

**REFERENCES, MODIFICATIONS, & EXTENSIONS**

**References**

- Lesson adapted from Nemours KidsHealth in the Classroom

**Modifications**

- This lesson is most age appropriate for youth ages 7-8 years old. See suggestions below for engaging younger and older youth.
  - 5-6 year olds:
    - This lesson requires independent reading of nutrition labels. To engage younger youth who are still developing reading skills, collaboratively read and work through the worksheet together.
    - Alternatively, select more simple food labels from the list below or from your home.
  - 9+ year olds:
    - Select more difficult food labels from the list below
    - Complete any of the extensions below to deepen understanding of the food that hide within food labels

**Extensions**

- Read both ingredient lists aloud. How far can you get before you have trouble pronouncing the words? Explain that, generally, the longer the ingredient list and the more names you can’t pronounce, the more processed the food. Have students research some of these “mystery ingredients” and discuss their findings.
- A strawberry is red, and so are lots of candies. Research what gives fresh fruits and veggies their vibrant colors and compare that with how candies get their color.
### Broccoli

**Nutrition Facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size: 1 cup (88g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount Per Serving</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calories</strong> 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fat</strong> 0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturated Fat</strong> 0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trans Fat</strong> 0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cholesterol</strong> 0mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sodium</strong> 30mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carbohydrate</strong> 6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dietary Fiber</strong> 2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sugars</strong> 1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong> 2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin A</strong> 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calcium</strong> 4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs: Calories: 2,000, 2,500.

**Total Fat** Less than 65g 60g
**Saturated Fat** Less than 20g 25g
**Cholesterol** Less than 300mg 300mg
**Sodium** Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
**Total Carbohydrate** 300g 375g
**Dietary Fiber** 25g 30g

**Calories per gram:**
- Fat 9
- Carbohydrate 4
- Protein 4

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**Ingredients:** Broccoli

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### Cream of Broccoli Soup

**Nutrition Facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About 2.5 Servings Per Container</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serving size</strong> 1/2 Cup (120mL) Condensed Soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount per serving</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calories</strong> 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Daily Value*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fat</strong> 5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturated Fat</strong> 1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trans Fat</strong> 0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cholesterol</strong> &lt;5mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sodium</strong> 790mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carbohydrate</strong> 9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dietary Fiber</strong> 1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sugars</strong> 3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Includes 4g Added Sugars</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong> 1g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin D</strong> 0mcg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calcium</strong> 30mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iron</strong> 0.4mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potassium</strong> 90mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zinc</strong> 11.6mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ingredients:** Water, Broccoli, Vegetable Oil (Corn, Canola, and/or Soybean), Modified Food Starch, Wheat Flour, Contains Less Than 2% of: Salt, Cream (Milk), Sugar, Whey, Soy Protein Concentrate, Dried Onions, Mustard Flour, Zinc Chloride (To Maintain Color), Natural Flavoring
Brown Rice

Ingredients: Brown Rice

Chicken Flavored Rice

Ingredients: Water, Parboiled Long Grain Rice; Canola and/or Sunflower Oil; Seasoning Blend [Salt, Sugar, Yeast Extract, Corn Maltodextrin, Dehydrated Carrots, Natural Flavors, Modified Corn Starch, Potassium Chloride, Parsley, Chicken Fat, Torula Yeast, Extractive of Turmeric (Color), Citric Acid, Garlic Powder, Onion Powder, Spices, Iron (Ferric Orthophosphate), Niacin, Thiamin (Thiamine Mononitrate), Folate (Folic Acid)].
Oatmeal

Nutrition Facts

About 19 servings per container
Serving size 1/2 cup (48g)

Amount per serving
Calories 190

% Daily Value*
Total Fat 4g 5%
  Saturated Fat 1g 5%
  Trans Fat 0g
Cholesterol 0mg 0%
Sodium 0mg 0%
Total Carbohydrate 33g 12%
  Dietary Fiber 5g 18%
  Total Sugars 0g
  Includes 0g Added Sugars 0%
Protein 6g

Vitamin D 0mcg 0%
Calcium 14mg 2%
Iron 2mg 10%
Potassium 172mg 4%

*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Ingredients: Whole grain oats

Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Cookie (38g) Servings Per Container 12

Amount Per Serving
Calories 170 Calories from Fat 60

% Daily Value*
Total Fat 7g 11%
  Saturated Fat 3g 15%
  Trans Fat 0g
  Polyunsaturated Fat 2.5g
  Monounsaturated Fat 1.5g
Cholesterol 0mg 0%
Sodium 150mg 6%
Potassium 45mg 1%
Total Carbohydrate 26g 9%
  Dietary Fiber <1g 2%
  Sugars 12g
Protein 1g

Ingredients: Corn Syrup, Enriched Bleached Flour (Wheat Flour, Barley Malt, Niacin, Reduced Iron, Thiamin Mononitrate [Vitamin B1], Riboflavin [Vitamin B2], Folic Acid), Palm and Soybean Oils with TBHQ and Citric Acid to Protect Flavor, Sugar, Whole Grain Oats, Water, Dextrose, Molasses, Raisins, Contains 2% or Less of each of the Following: Soy Flour, Leavening (Baking Soda, Ammonium Bicarbonate, Sodium Aluminum Phosphate), Whey, Salt, Soy Lecithin, Corn Starch, Mono-and Di-Glycerides, Sorbitan Monostearate, Polysorbate 60, Eggs, Palm and Palm Kernel Oil, Egg Whites, Cocoa Processed with Alkali, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Rice Flour, Nonfat Dry Milk, Modified Corn Starch, Datem, Modified Tapioca Starch, Carrageenan, Colors (Caramel Color, Titanium Dioxide, Red 40, Beta Carotene, Annatto Extract, Turmeric, Yellow 5, Blue 1) Sorbic Acid (to preserve freshness) Spices, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Citric Acid, Malic Acid, Propylene Glycol Monostearate, Sodium Stearoyl Lactylate, Polysorbate 80, Pectin, Sodium Citrate, Modified Wheat Starch, Chocolate, Cocoa Butter