

Obesity Unit: Label reading activity

(30 points, 10 per section, based on completeness of each product)

Objective: Students will develop the habit of examining food labels of products that they consume regularly.

Rationale: Label reading is an important skill that provides information about what kind of nutrition you are getting.

To do: Among all of the things you eat, pick one drink and two food items. Record these things down, using complete sentences, on folder paper. You may choose to type these responses, instead. When done, staple product labels to your written responses.

- Full name of the food product
- Full name of the manufacturer
- The country or state where the food is manufactured
- Number of servings per container
- How many calories per serving?
- How many calories in the entire container?
- How many total calories of fat per serving?
- How many grams of sugar per serving?
- How many grams of sodium per serving?
- Amount of carbohydrates per serving?
- Any RDA (recommended daily allowance) of iron?
- Any RDA of dietary fiber?
- Would you consider this to be a health food? Why/why not?

For example: (I usually tape the actual label next to this information.)

1. The food product's name is Maui Style Shrimp Chips.
2. Its manufacturer is Frito-Lay North America, Inc.
3. The chips were made in the USA (Texas?).
4. There is only one serving per container.
5. There are 220 calories per serving.
6. There are 220 calories in the entire container.
7. There are 110 calories from fat per serving.
8. There are 0 grams of sugar per serving.
9. There are 430 mgs. of sodium per serving (18%).
10. There are 27 grams of total carbohydrates per serving (9%).
11. The RDA of iron is 0%.
12. The RDA of dietary fiber is 1 gram per serving.
13. This is not a health food. The first ingredient is oil, followed by starch, salt and artificial flavors. It's high in fat and sodium.

Teacher directions and notes:

1. At the beginning of the lesson, I like to display a bunch of commonly eaten snacks and popular drinks (empty boxes and labels). Students like to see what they are actually consuming (some look in their school bags and purses). I talk about serving size and sodium/sugar content of products (i.e. a can of

Arizona Green Tea, a popular drink at our school, is actually three serving sizes—240 calories for the entire can!).

2. You may need to point out that the chart that usually appears at the end of the food label (RDA part) is a footnote, standard on all labels.
3. Some fast food places and coffee shops (McDonalds, Starbucks) have calorie and nutritional values of their products. You can find them on their websites, also. I brought some/printed some and posted them on the board.
4. This is a good opportunity to talk about saturated fats and its effects on the body. Have them look at the ingredients, as well. The first five ingredients are the most important, in terms of healthiness (is it sugar or high fructose corn syrup?). Also, foods with 4 or more grams of dietary fiber per serving are helpful in making you feel full and eat less (it is recommended to eat 30-45 grams a day).
5. Extend the lesson: have students compare similar snacks/drinks, one being much healthier than the other (they could create a graphic organizer that side-by-side shows data). Students could also find healthier options than the current selected item (i.e., instead of eating a bag of Doritos, how different in nutrition is eating a bag of pretzels?) Students can compare organic products versus non-organic ones.

Helpful websites:

FDA label reading: <http://www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/consumerinformation/ucm078889.htm>

Reading food labels: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd/Tipsheets/readthelabel.htm>

Understanding food labels: <http://www.fcs.uga.edu/pubs/PDF/FDNS-NE-301.pdf>

Label reading 101 (youtube): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrdCBqFYDyo>

National Healthcare Foundation Standards and Accountability Criteria:

- 2.1 Concepts of effective communication
- 2.2 Written communication skills
- 8.2 Team Member participation
- 9.1 Healthy Behaviors