
NE LESSON CODE GN-000-17

Smart Snacking

LESSON DESCRIPTION

In this video and recipe demonstration lesson, class participants will learn about smart snacking strategies, especially for days when they're "on the go." Also, participants will evaluate their families' current snack habits, and get ideas for healthier snack choices.

OBJECTIVES

After attending this class participants will be able to:

- state one smart snack strategy they plan to try out at home; and
- state at least one new healthy snack food or recipe they plan to try with their family.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Television
- DVD Player
- DVD: *Fit Families*, stock no. DV0007 produced by DSHS
- Flipchart, markers (or dry erase board)
- Pens or pencils for everyone in the class
- *Real Snacks for Real Families Worksheet*

Note About New Lesson Survey Forms:

The first few times a new lesson is presented, staff and participants need to complete the survey forms attached at the end of this lesson. Please note that the *Staff Survey Form* is different from the *Participant Survey Form*. Please send in 30 *Participant Surveys* need to be completed.

Please mail completed surveys to:

Delores Preece
Texas Department of State Health Services
Nutrition Services Section
1100 W. 49th St
Austin, TX 78756

TEACHING PREPARATION

Prepare three flipchart pages. On one page write the title: “Snack Strategies for Kids.” On another page, write the title: “Foods that make Healthy Snacks.” On the last page write the title: “Real Snacks for Real Families.” (If using dry erase board, write titles as you go through the lesson).

ICEBREAKER

Welcome everyone to the class. Then ask the parents in the class to name:

- a healthy snack that they’d like their family to eat more often.
- ask the children in the class to name their favorite snack.

CLASS AND VIDEO INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

- **Today’s class is about smart snacking. We’ll watch a short video that covers snacks for kids, as well as some tips for choosing healthy snacks and beverages when you’re on the go.**
- **After the video we will talk more about snacks, and when you leave today, you should have some new ideas for healthy snacks for you and your family.**
- Show the video.

VIDEO DISCUSSION

Discuss why snacks are important for kids:

- **The video started out talking about snacks for children. Why do kids need snacks?**
Prompt the following answer:
 - Children have high energy needs and small tummies, so they need to eat something in between meals.
- **The best snacks for kids include foods from different food groups; sort of like ‘miniature meals’ that offer protein, a little fat, some bread or grains, and some fruits or vegetables. For example, suppose your child is a big fan of pretzels. What else could you serve with pretzels to create a more balanced snack? Examples:**
 - a little cheese and a few apple slices
 - some banana and peanut butter
 - add some raisins, cereal and peanuts to make a trail mix

- **What if your child loves apples? What could you combine with apples?** Examples:
 - apple and peanut butter and bagel
 - sliced apple on bread or bagel with cheese melted on top
 - apple slices with yogurt dip
 - apple s'mores (toast, bagel, or graham crackers topped with light cream cheese, cinnamon, apple slices)

Discuss scheduling snacks for kids:

- **Even though children need to eat more often, that doesn't mean they should be able to eat anything they want, anytime they want. Timing is important. What suggestions do you have to keep kids from snacking constantly or begging to eat right before dinner?** Prompt some of the following responses and write tips on flip chart titled "Snack Strategies for Kids."
 - Set scheduled times for snacks (it's best to serve snacks about 2-4 hours before lunch or dinner so that kids have time to work up an appetite before the next meal).
 - Let kids know the snack schedule and get their help in planning snacks.
 - Offer your child a choice between two healthy snacks instead of asking "What do you want to eat for a snack?"
 - Plan snacks to take with you when you're out and about.
 - Offer the snack at the scheduled time. If your child isn't hungry or doesn't want what you've offered, he'll need to wait until the next meal.

Discuss processed, pre-packaged snack choices:

- **Now let's talk about common snack foods. Many families rely on pre-packaged snacks from the grocery store; things like fruit snacks, miniature crackers, snack bars, granola bars, cereal bars, etc. Many of these foods *appear* to be healthy snacks, but are they? How do you decide if a packaged snack is a healthy choice for your family?** Prompt the following responses:
 - Check the ingredient listing (look for whole grains, nuts, dried fruit, etc.)
 - Read the Nutrition Facts label (check calories and serving size; look for more protein, more fiber, less sugar; check for vitamins and minerals, especially vitamin A, vitamin C and iron)
 - Consider whether it's a sugary, sticky, chewy food (not good for teeth.)
 - Consider whether it's a choking risk for your child (depending on child's age.)
- **If you find that some of favorite store-bought snacks are not as nutritious as you thought, save them and use them as "sometimes" or "once-in-awhile" snacks. Or, cut the portion size in half, and eat the pre-packaged snack along with another food like some yogurt, fruit, or raw veggie sticks.**

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Pass out examples of different pre-packaged snacks (granola bars, crackers, etc.) Try to choose examples that contrast with each other in terms of nutrient content. As a group, compare the ingredients and nutrient content, especially calories, saturated fat, sugar, fiber, iron. Discuss which snack food would be a healthier choice or how you might cut the portion sizes in half and combine the packaged snacks with a fruit, vegetable or dairy food to create more balanced snacks.

Background information snack bars and fruit snacks - If participants have questions about these foods, some general comments are noted here. Also, instructors can incorporate this information into the lesson if they wish.

Snack Bars: (includes granola bars, cereal bars, trail mix bars, breakfast grahams, fruit and cereal bars, pop tarts, etc.): It might help to think of snack bars as rectangular cookies. Most are high in sugar, but several brands now feature less sugar. Some types offer more nutrients than others, so the only way to know is to read and compare the Nutrition Facts labels. Also, look for bars that contain fruit, nuts, or whole grains, rather than chocolate, marshmallows and chocolate candies. Chewier snack bars will stick to the teeth, so be sure to brush afterwards.

Fruit Snacks and other fruit-flavored treats: Even though most fruit snacks contain some fruit juice and provide 100% vitamin C, fruit snacks are not fruit! They are not even fruit substitutes, so don't count them as a fruit serving. Instead, think of them as chewy, fruit-flavored candy with added vitamin C. They are okay as fun treats once in awhile if kids understand that they are not fruit, and if they brush their teeth afterwards. Also, avoid giving fruit snacks to very young children because of the choking risk.

Discuss making snacks at home:

- **So the alternative to pre-packaged, processed snacks is to make your own snacks. But that doesn't mean you have to use recipes; most snack ideas are just simple combinations of foods. What kinds of foods make the healthiest snacks?** Prompt the following responses. Write responses down on a flip chart page titled "Foods that make healthy snacks." Examples include:
 - fruits
 - vegetables
 - low-fat dairy foods (esp. yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese)
 - whole grain bread, (esp. bagel, and tortillas and crackers)
 - breakfast cereals
 - pasta/noodles/macaroni
 - peanut butter, nuts, seeds
 - low-fat baked goods (graham crackers, animal cookies, whole-grain cookies)
 - baked chips, pretzels
 - leftovers! (especially cold veggie pizza!)

- Bottom line: **Just about any food that you use for a regular meal can be eaten as a snack. However, not all snacks are *portable* (consider snacks with cheese melted on top; they obviously don't travel well). So when it comes to "on-the-go" snacks, it takes a bit of extra planning to pre-package your own snacks, buy portable fruit, and pack perishable snacks in an insulated bag with an ice pack. But it's well-worth the effort.**

Discuss "good-to-go" beverages:

Drinks count as snacks too. Avoid filling up on sport drinks, sodas, fruit drinks (like Kool-Aid), and punches. These drinks contain a lot of empty calories with very little to no nutrients.

What are some healthier options to drink when you're on the go?

- Choose water or low-calorie sparkling water or 100% fruit juice.

Do you have any tips for including healthy drinks when you're on the go? Ask participants to share any tips, either from the video or from their own experience. Examples include:

- Keep water on hand in bottles so it can be ready to go when you are.
- If you don't like the taste of water try squeezing a little bit of lemon or lime in the water.
- Don't give too much juice to kids (4-6 ounces a day).

Real Snack For Real Families Activity: (See next page for explanation)

- **Now let's switch gears. One goal of today's class is for you to get some new ideas for healthy snacks. A fun way to do that is to get ideas from *each other*. So together, we're going to create a list that I call "Real Snacks for Real Families." Think of it as WIC Nutrition meets reality TV!**
- **First I'll ask each of you to brainstorm a list of all the snacks and drinks your family eats (the good as well as the not-so-good). Then you will look over your list and choose at least one healthy snack idea to put it on our list of "Real Snacks for Real Families." The great thing is that these snacks will not be from some test kitchen or recipe book; they will be real snack ideas from your families.**
- **Also, as you do this activity, you will have the chance to take a close look at your family's snack habits and think of ways to make some positive changes if you need to.**

Follow the steps for the activity as outlined on the *Real Snacks for Real Families Activity InstructionSheet* that follows. Follow activity with wrap-up and class evaluation.

Real Snacks for Real Families Activity

Instruction Sheet

Step 1: Have participants list their families' routine snacks

Pass out *Real Snacks for Real Families Worksheet* (see following page). Have each participant make a list of all the routine snacks her family eats (homemade snacks, store-bought snacks, vending machine snacks, etc.). Explain that no one else in the class needs to see this list, so they will not be judged on their snacks! The list should include both healthy snacks and less desirable snacks, and participants should be sure to include their kids' snacks.

Step 2: Ask participants to evaluate their family's snack habits

Have each participant look over her list to see which snacks are healthy snacks - or at least relatively healthy (help participants if needed). If desired, participants can circle or check the healthy snacks on their list. Also, participants should take note of any less healthy, empty-calorie snacks that their family eats *too often*. Participants can mark these as well.

Step 3: Choose a snack idea for the "Real Snacks for Real Families" list.

Have participants choose at least one healthy snack idea to share with the group. Ask for volunteers to share ideas or go around the room and have each participant take turns telling the group about their idea. Write snack ideas down on a flipchart page titled "Real Snacks for Real Families." Try to get about ten ideas on the "Real Snacks for Real Families" list. To add some fun, you can help participants come up with descriptive names for their snack ideas (for example: Cassandra's Tortilla Wrap, Andrea's Colorful Fruit Kabobs, etc.,)

As participants share their ideas, ask questions about preparation, ingredients, etc., and encourage group discussion (ex: Has anyone else ever made a snack like this? What did you do differently?). When appropriate, suggest ingredient substitutions like whole grain breads, low-fat cheese, light cream cheese, etc. For example, if someone's suggestion is cinnamon toast with apple slices, find out if they've tried it with whole wheat bread.

Option (for larger groups): if you have a very large class, ask participants break into smaller groups of three to five people and have them talk about their healthy snack ideas within the smaller groups. After 5 minutes or so, ask each group to choose their favorite suggestions for the "Real Snacks for Real Families" list and share them with the group. As they share their ideas, write them on the flipchart.

Step 4 (Optional): After you complete your list of "Real Snacks for Real Families," the instructor can serve as a 'finalist' judge and choose the top three winning snacks and then have the group vote for their favorite. Consider giving some sort of small prize to the winner.

WRAP-UP / EVALUATION

Summarize the class by saying something like, **Today's activity gave you a chance to look at your family's snack habits and see what changes you need to make. Which tips from the video or our discussion will you consider trying at home?** Possible Answers:

- Serve more “mini-meal snacks to the kids.
 - Eat fewer snacks like chips, candy, etc. Try more fruit, yogurt, etc.
 - Schedule snacks more carefully and stick to the schedule.
 - Plan-ahead and have some “good-to-go” snacks available and ready to go.
 - Cut back on sodas, fruit drinks (like Kool-Aid) and fruit punch; drink more water.
 - Try low-calorie sparkling water.
 - Keep an eye on how much juice the kids drink.
1. **Ask participants to write their idea down on the worksheet to take home with them.**
 2. **Then ask the participants to write down at least one new snack idea they think they'll try from the “Real Snacks for Real Families” list.**
 3. **Lastly, ask the participants to take the worksheet home and share it with their family.** They can show their family what their snack habits look like on paper. Suggest that they work with other family members to come up with their own list of healthy snack ideas. They could call it “Real Snacks for Our Real Family.”
 4. **Thank participants for coming to the class.**

Real Snacks for Real Families Worksheet

Write down the usual snacks that your family eats and drinks. Write down as many snacks as you can think of, including both healthy and not-so-healthy snacks.

At the end of class....

1. List one tip from the video or the class discussion that you'll consider trying at home:

2. Write down at least one new healthy snack idea that you'll think you'll try from the "Real Snacks for Real Families" list:

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**Smart Snacking
Staff Survey Form**

LA# _____

Date _____

1. Was the lesson easy to read and follow?

Yes No

2. Did you like the video included with this lesson?

Yes No

3. Did you like the activity included with this lesson?

Yes No

4. What did you like best about this class?

5. What would make the class better?

6. How well did participants respond to the class? Participation was (check one)

Good Negative Indifferent

7. Do you plan to use this lesson again?

Yes No

Comments: _____

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Smart Snacks
Participant Survey Form

LA# _____

Date _____

1. My ethnic group is:

___ White

___ Asian

___ Hispanic

___ Native American

___ African American

___ Other

2. How much did you like this class?

A lot b

A little

Not at all

3. What change do you plan to make to your snack habits?

4. What is the most useful thing you learned from the class today?

5. What would make this class better for you?

6. Comments:

Thank you for your answers!

