Choosing Healthful Foods Lesson Idea

Objective

- Recognize that eating a variety of healthful foods is fun, helps you feel good and is good for your heart.

Prepare

- Find two or three food packages that include "Nutrition Facts."
- Have children bring in several magazines with photographs and other illustrations of a variety of foods.
- Download and print the Making Healthful Choices Activity Sheet for classroom distribution.
- Review the information on the Making Healthful Choices Activity Sheet.

Materials

- Making Healthful Choices Activity Sheet, 2-3 nutrition labels, magazines with food pictures, four pieces of poster board (or space on a bulletin board for four displays)

Explore

1. Ask children to name several foods that provide proteins, carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

   Suppose you are not sure what nutrients a food contains. How can you find out? Children may be familiar with food package labels entitled "Nutrition Facts." Display one of these labels. Explain that the label tells what major nutrients and how much of each major nutrient are in the packaged food; not all of the nutrients are listed. Read some of the nutrients and their amounts. Then point out that the label also tells how much of each nutrient one serving of the food will provide in a person's daily diet. In addition, the label tells how much sodium, calcium, iron, vitamin A and vitamin C the product contains. Read some of these nutrition facts from the label.

   Your body needs many different kinds of nutrients to stay strong and healthy. What is the best way to get all these different nutrients? Help children recognize that the most healthful diet contains a wide variety of foods. Point out that apples are a healthful food. What if you ate only apples? Would that be a healthful diet? (No. Apples provide some nutrients, but they lack others.)

2. Some kinds of foods are OK to eat some times, but you shouldn’t eat too much of them or eat them too often. What are these foods? (Sugary foods—candy, cookies and cakes; fatty foods—butter, mayonnaise, ice cream, hot dogs; foods cooked in fat—french fries or potato chips; salty foods—potato chips, soups.)

   Why do you think it is more healthful to eat salty foods, sweet foods and fatty foods only once in a while? Help children give reasons they know. Add any of the following not mentioned: Those foods may have limited value in keeping a person strong and healthy; they fill a person up so that more healthful foods are not eaten; a diet rich in fats is harmful to the heart, especially as a person grows older.

   You know which foods help keep you stronger and healthier, and you know that some foods do not help much to make you stronger and healthier. You also know that the best way to get a healthy diet is to eat many different kinds of healthful foods. How can you use these facts when you decide what foods to eat? (Plan to eat the most healthful foods first. Eat only a few salty, sugary or fatty foods and only after eating more healthful foods.)

3. Invite children to plan some healthful meals. Label four pieces of poster board (or four spaces on a bulletin board) Breakfast, Lunch, Snack and Dinner. Have children work in four small groups. Assign each group one of the four meals. Have children look through magazines and find pictures of healthful foods that they
might eat for their assigned meal. Then have children confer to select a good combination of foods to include on their display. Before the groups arrange their display, discuss their choices with them. For example, if one group has chosen fried eggs for breakfast, point out that it is best to limit the number of eggs and the amount of fried food a person eats. Encourage children to think of a more healthful choice (such as a bowl of oatmeal). Have each group present its choices to the rest of the class.

4. Distribute the Making Healthful Choices Activity Sheet. Tell children to use the facts they know about healthful foods to choose the three most healthful foods for each meal. Point out that some of the foods they do not choose may also have nutritional value. However, they should choose the most healthful foods first. Have children discuss their choices.