How Do You Choose Snacks and Other Foods? Lesson Idea

Objectives

- State the influence of peer pressure on personal health decisions.
- Identify external factors, such as parents, friends and advertising that influence choices about food.
- Recognize that the ability to make responsible health decisions helps people feel good about themselves.
- Identify factors that affect a person's health decisions.
- Describe the logical steps in the decision-making process.
- Recognize that it's sometimes necessary to say "no" to make good decisions.

Prepare

- Ask students to look for a newspaper or magazine advertisement that makes them interested in a particular snack food. You may wish to make this a homework assignment.
- Download and print Rate That Snack! Activity Sheet for class distribution

Materials

- Rate That Snack! Activity Sheet, old newspapers and magazines

Explore

1. Discuss snacking habits with your students. What is your favorite snack? Is it a healthful choice? Encourage students to discuss why their favorite snacks are or are not healthful choices. Ask them why they chose those snacks: because they tasted good, because they satisfied their hunger or gave them energy, because their parents or someone else served them. How many of you have chosen a snack in the last few days that could have been a better choice? Encourage students to tell about less healthful choices and their reasons for them.

Point out that snacks are often a part of the diet that students choose for themselves. Do you and your friends ever help yourselves to snacks at your house? Do you ever eat snacks at a friend's house? Do you ever buy snacks for yourself at a neighborhood store? Point out that in all these situations, students must make a choice between more healthful and less healthful foods.

What advice would you follow to choose a healthful snack? (Choose snacks with proteins, vitamins and minerals; pick a snack to match your activity, such as a high-carbohydrate snack for a vigorous activity; eat plain popcorn; don't eat bite-sized crackers and cookies straight from the box; even though a food may be fat-free, don't eat large amounts of it; combine sweets with healthy snacks.)

2. Have each student show the newspaper or magazine advertisement for a snack food that he or she brought to class. Point out that one reason people choose a particular snack is because they have seen it advertised on television or in a magazine. Have students take turns showing their ads and telling why the food seems appealing and whether it is a wise choice for a snack.

3. Have you ever found yourself and a friend eating a snack that you would not have chosen if you had been on your own? Point out that sometimes other people influence our choices of snack foods. Have students work in small groups to dramatize the following situations:
   - You usually eat fruit and low-fat yogurt for an after-school snack. You invite a friend over and he wants you to sneak chocolate chip cookies out of your kitchen. What do you do?
   - You go to a neighborhood store with a group of friends to buy a snack. Your friends tease you when you buy baked tortilla chips or pretzels instead of chocolate bars. What do you do?
You are at a sleep-over. You have already had buttery popcorn, cookies and pizza. Now your friends are having a hot fudge sundae. What do you do?

After each dramatization, encourage the class to ask the group members why they presented the situation the way they did. If necessary, model how you would handle the first situation. You might say that you could not sneak out cookies because your mother or father would not like it, but you can both have fruit and yogurt.

4. Have students use Rate That Snack! Activity Sheet, to record each snack they eat over three days. Have them bring the charts to school and discuss them in small groups. Invite them to discuss their most healthful and least healthful snacks, the situations in which they were likely to choose a less healthful snack and how they could improve their snacking habits.

Review with students the steps they followed in making decisions about choosing snacks. Guide students to describe the process of decision-making: gathering information, evaluating it and then arriving at decisions based on what they have learned.