

PREVENTING CHILDHOOD OBESITY - part 5

Choosing Fast Foods Wisely

Training Curriculum: Survey Question 5

OBJECTIVES

1. Staff will compare the fat and calorie content of various fast foods
2. Staff will be able to identify healthier fast food choices.

MATERIALS

Staff Reference Sheet

Participant Handouts:

Happy Meal, Healthy Child?

Fast Food Restaurant Guide

Nutrition Education Module for Survey Question 5

Nutrition Education Survey Plan

Attachments 2A-2D

BACKGROUND

What are your favorite fast foods?

How often do you eat them?

Allow staff to share.

Almost everyone eats fast foods, at least occasionally. In fact, a Big Mac may really hit the spot at times!

But, what if Big Mac attacks come frequently? Why would fast foods on a regular basis be a cause of concern for WIC?

Allow staff to respond.

Fast foods are high in fat content and low in fruits and vegetables which is contrary to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Healthy People 2010 goals. *Also briefly mention the 'Five a Day' campaign.*

How often do you think you should eat fast foods?

Allow staff to respond.

There is no hard and fast rule. It would be reasonable to limit fast foods to once a week, especially considering how tempting it is to pick the high fat options! However, many participants may not be willing to limit fast foods. They need advice on making healthy choices.

What do you feel are the best fast food options? What are the worst?

Ask staff to give their opinions about the various restaurants and the menu items. Then pass out copies of attachments 2A-2D so that staff can compare and contrast restaurants and menu items.

As you can see from the handouts, fast foods vary tremendously in the amount of fat and calories they contain. Names can be deceiving. Participants can benefit by choosing lower fat and calorie options.

In general, what common sense things can you do to decrease the calories/fat in a fast food meal?

Allow staff to respond. Supplement with the following information from the Staff Reference Sheet, if necessary:

- Control portion size. Choose a small sandwich, burger or fries.
- Keep it simple. Less toppings usually means less calories.
- Look for variety. Select restaurants that offer more choices. Choose lower fat options such as baked potato with a *little* butter. Choose grilled options.
- Have it your way! Ask the restaurant for a special grill order without the extras.
- Drink water instead of sodas and shakes.
- Use small amounts of dressing on salad.
- Educate yourself. Fast foods can be deceiving. They may have more fat than is obvious! Most restaurants have information on the fat and calorie content of their foods. Ask them. This information is also available on the Internet. Keep a copy in the glove compartment.

What can you do to increase fruit and vegetable intake when eating fast foods?

Allow staff to respond. Supplement with the following tips from the Staff Reference Sheet, if necessary:

- Baked potato on the side
- Side salad or salad bar
- Add lettuce and tomato to sandwiches
- Fruit juice
- Get take out and add fruits and vegetables at home

REVIEW OF NUTRITION EDUCATION MODULE AND HANDOUT

Hand out the nutrition Education Survey Plan, the Module for question 5 and the flyer.

How likely is it that parents would choose answer ‘e’ for question 5 on the survey?

The module assumes that few people will!

What would you do in the unlikely event that someone does choose answer e?

Allow staff to respond and provide the following suggestions.

Regardless on what answer the person chooses, find out *why* she chose it. If someone does choose answer e, perhaps she is saying this because she feels out of control of her child’s food choices and so therefore has to justify her answer. Depending on how parents answer, you may have to work with them individually rather than follow the format in the module. For those who put down one of the other answers, you can probably continue with the module format.

If the parent does believe that fast foods should be limited, the first question in the module will prompt her to explain why. Does she think they are all bad? Does she already know that some choices may be high in fat and sugar? Does she know that some options are healthier than others? Review the fast foods facts at the beginning of the flyer as appropriate.

Besides being high in fat and sugar and low in fruits and vegetables, what would be another practical reason to encourage participants to limit fast foods?

Allow staff to respond. Mention that it can get expensive!

After finding out what the parent thinks of fast food, the module directs you to next assess what kinds of fast foods the child chooses. Her response will give you a basic idea if the child is getting healthy choices. Praise the mother for any healthy choices her child makes.

The next portion of the module instructs staff to give participants some general tips on choosing fast food by reviewing the “instead of, try this” section of the flyer.

Mothers may say that their children do not want the options you suggest on the flyer. The module directs you to ask the mother if her child would eat these foods. How would you respond if the parent says, “But my child doesn’t like those foods!”

Have staff share ideas. Then review the other ideas in the flyer listed under the ‘instead of, try this’ section.

The module then suggests that staff ask participants which ideas they will try.

What do you think might be the biggest roadblock to children eating healthy fast foods?

Allow staff to respond. Mention that perhaps the biggest roadblock to the child eating healthy

fast food choices is the parent.

Making healthy fast food choices will take role modeling and consistency. The module suggests that staff review the fast food restaurant guide and encourage participants to be positive role models by choosing healthy fast foods themselves.

The module concludes by asking them which ideas that they will try.

PRACTICE SESSION - USING THE NUTRITION EDUCATION MODULE

Role-play the module in front of the group. Ask for volunteers to play the part of a typical caregiver while you play the more difficult part of the nutrition aide. (You may want to ask for some volunteers prior to the training session.)

For each role-play, the caregiver should have a different problem or situation. Some suggestions include:

"My kid wants to eat fast food all the time."

"I don't like any of these fast foods on the list."

"My kid won't eat these foods. He likes fries and shake."

Be prepared to make some mistakes so staff realize that the role playing is a learning experience not a "command performance." After each role-play, get feedback from staff by asking the following questions:

What part of the contact did you especially like?

What could be done to improve the contact?

After doing several role plays, have divide the group into pairs and practice some role-plays on their own. If they are reluctant to do individual role-plays, do a 'group role play' by dividing the group in half. Assign each 'half' to play the role of nutritionist or the parents. Keep the discussion going between the two teams by asking questions such as the following:

You are the nutritionist who is about to discuss fast foods. How would you get started? (Tell them to refer to the module.) (Elicit response from the 'nutritionist group.')

Then ask the participant group, "What might a participant say in return?" (Elicit response from participant group.)

Then again ask the nutritionist group to respond to what the participant group said.

Continue working with the group, trying to get them accustomed to using the module.

Choosing Fast Food Wisely

Staff Reference Sheet

Burgers, shakes and fries are as American as apple pie! Fast foods are part of our culture and it seems that they are here to stay, especially since life styles are becoming more hectic. How successful would WIC staff be in trying to convince participants to avoid them? How many WIC staff eat fast foods themselves?

Opinions about fast foods vary, from the food purist who flatly rejects them to the busy working mom who sees them as a welcome alternative to spending time in the kitchen. According to a recent Parenting.com poll, about 20% of those surveyed eat fast foods 'as much as possible' while 6% stated they never eat them. Fast foods like all foods are neither good nor bad. It depends on how they are used. WIC staff can help parents choose them wisely and eat a more balanced diet.

The two biggest areas of concern with fast foods are high fat content and the lack of fruits and vegetables. Those who eat fast foods 'as much as possible' run the risk of consuming plenty of calories but inadequate vitamins, minerals and fiber. Here are some ways to avoid falling into this trap:

- Control portion size. Choose a small sandwich, burger or small fries. A McDonald Big Mac has 32 grams of fat. A regular hamburger has 9 grams.
- Keep it simple. Fewer toppings usually mean less calories.
- Look for variety. Select restaurants that offer more choices. Choose lower fat options such as baked potato with a *little* butter. Choose grilled options.
- Have it your way! Ask the restaurant for a special grill order without the extras.
- Drink water instead of sodas and shakes.
- Use small amounts of dressing on salad.
- Educate yourself. Fast foods can be deceiving. They may have more fat than is obvious! Most restaurants will provide information on the fat and calorie content of their foods. Ask them. This information is also available on the Internet. Keep a copy in the glove compartment.

Getting five fruits and vegetables each day can be quite a challenge when using fast foods frequently. The following tips will help:

- Side salad or salad bar
- Add lettuce and tomato to sandwiches
- Fruit juice
- Get take out and add fruits and vegetables at home

Choosing Fast Foods Wisely: Survey Question 5

Most children love fast foods. You mentioned on the survey that you feel children should eat fast foods about _____.

What made you choose that answer?

Allow parent to share. Is she aware that some foods are high in fat and sugar? Is she aware that some are better choices than others? Supplement her answer with the facts listed at the beginning of the flyer.

When you go out, what fast foods does your child like to eat?

Allow parent to respond. Assess what foods her child eats. Praise her for any healthy choices.

Some fast foods are healthier than others. When you get strapped for time and decide to eat fast food, here are some ideas for making wise choices.

Review the 'instead of, try this' section of the flyer.

Do you think your child would eat the kinds of choices suggested on the flyer? What could you do if your child doesn't want the foods you choose?

Allow the parent to respond. Then share the remaining tips in the flyer.

Which ideas will you try?

Probably the best way to teach children is to set the example by eating healthy fast foods yourself. Here are some healthier fast food options.

Provide a copy of "Fast Food Restaurant Guide."

Which ones will you try?

Encourage her to try the suggestions if she is unfamiliar with the menu items.

“Happy Meal,” Healthy Child?



Most children love fast foods. Commercials tell parents that burgers, fries and shakes make children smile. But, if your child eats fast foods more than once a week, think about these facts:

- ♥ Some fast foods are healthier choices than others.
- ♥ Many fast foods are high in sugar, fat and salt. Children naturally prefer these tastes. The more they are exposed to them, the more they want them.
- ♥ Children may not know what foods are good for them. They know what tastes good. They can learn that healthy foods taste good too.

As a parent, you are faced with the challenge of teaching your child to like healthy foods. When you are too busy to cook, here are some helpful tips for making wise fast food choices:

- ♥ Encourage your child to choose from the healthier fast food options that *you* buy.

Instead of this...	try this ...	and be sure to add some fruits and vegetables.
large burger	small burger	add extra lettuce and tomato
fried chicken	grilled chicken	baked potato with a little butter
large fries	baked potato/small fries	fruits and vegetables from the salad bar
sausage pizza	pizza with vegetables	broccoli, peppers or other vegetables on pizza
soda or shake	water or low fat milk	fruit juice

- ♥ If your child insists on something else, say, “These are the choices, which ones do you want?” If your child refuses, wait until the next meal or the next. Sooner or later, children eat what parents serve. Children may have to skip a few meals before they understand that *you* control what foods are offered.
- ♥ Rather than eating at the restaurant, get “take out.” That way, you can make a fast food meal healthier by adding some fruits and vegetables from home. If you are in a hurry, buy items from a salad bar at the restaurant or grocery store.
- ♥ Ask the restaurant for the fat and calorie content of their foods. Choose the ones that have the least. Don’t be fooled. Some foods may look or sound healthy, yet be loaded with fat and calories.
- ♥ TV ads impact your child’s attitude toward food. Limit exposure to food commercials by limiting TV time. TV ads also tell parents to love their children by giving them sweet or salty treats. Love them with good nutrition instead.

**The Pennsylvania WIC Program
1-800-WIC-WINS**



Robert S. Zimmerman, Jr. Secretary of Health

Fast Food Restaurant Guide

Fast foods can vary a lot in fat and calories. Don't be fooled! Just because something is made with turkey, tuna or lettuce doesn't mean it is low fat! It all depends on how it is prepared. Here are some lower fat fast food choices for you and your child.

McDonald's

Regular hamburger or cheeseburger	Grilled Chicken Deluxe (without the mayo)
Chicken McGrill	Scrambled eggs/English muffin
McSalad Shaker	Egg McMuffin
Fruit and Yogurt Parfait	Plain hotcakes
Small fries or hash browns	4 piece chicken McNuggets

Subway

Subway offers a large variety of low fat subs, sandwiches and salads. However, *avoid* the seafood, tuna, classic Italian and meatball options. These are *higher* in fat.

Arby's

Stick to their light menu such as light roast chicken, turkey or beef.

Taco Bell

Burritos: Bean, Chili Cheese, Grilled Chicken
Gorditas: Beef Fiesta, Beef Supreme, Grilled Chicken Fiesta, Grilled Chicken Supreme
Taco: Taco, Taco Supreme, Soft Taco, Soft Taco Supreme, Grilled Chicken Soft Taco
Sides: Pintos and Cheese, Mexican Rice

Wendy's

Plain Baked Potato (little butter on the side)	Chili
Grilled Chicken Sandwich	Hamburger Kid's Meal
Salad Bar: Avoid high fat toppings.	Junior Hamburger
Salads: Caesar side, Deluxe Garden, Grilled Chicken or Grilled Chicken Caesar	

Burger King

Hamburger Small fries

KFC

BBQ baked beans	Corn on the cob	Tender roast chicken without skin
BBQ chicken sandwich	Mashed potato/gravy	Coleslaw

Pizza Hut

Hand Tossed or Thin and Crispy Pizza: Cheese, Veggie Lover's, Ham or Pepperoni varieties
Spaghetti and Marinara Sauce or Cavatini
Salad Bar but avoid the high fat toppings

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