



# JUNK FOOD WARS

Teacher's Guide

## Introduction

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In *Junk Food Wars*, students learn the importance of making healthy decisions regarding the foods they eat. They discover that while junk food can be awfully tempting, it often contains ingredients that can damage their health and create unwanted weight problems. *Junk Food Wars* aims to arm students with facts about nutrition, provide the skinny on what all those percentages and unusual words on food labels really mean, and empower them with the ability to make healthy eating a habit for life.

## Learning Objectives

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By viewing this program, students will be able to:

- Examine food labels for such things as salt level, fat content, and calories.
- Describe common ways sugar and unhealthy fats are often disguised in food.
- Discuss the importance of eating nutritious meals.
- Recognize the relationship between eating and metabolism.
- Distinguish the difference between foods that make up a healthy meal and those that don't.
- Describe methods manufacturers use to sell us foods that are not healthy.
- Make healthy choices in situations where junk food predominates, but is not the only option.
- Adjust their eating habits to become healthier.

## Educational Standards

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### NATIONAL STANDARDS

#### Health Education

This program correlates with the National Health Education Standards: Achieving Health Literacy from the American School Health Association. The content has been aligned with the following educational standards and benchmarks from this organization.

- Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks.
- Students will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology and other factors on health.

*This represents the work of the Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. Copies of National Health Education Standards: Achieving Health Literacy can be obtained through the American School Health Association, Association for the Advancement of Health Education or the American Cancer Society. Reprinted with permission.*

#### English Language Arts Standards

The activities in this Teacher's Guide were created in compliance with the following National Standards for the English Language Arts from the National Council of Teachers of English.

- Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

*Standards for the English Language Arts, by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, copyright 1996 by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.*

## Technology Standards

The activities in this Teacher’s Guide were created in compliance with the following National Education Technology Standards from the National Education Technology Standards Project.

- Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.
- Students use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.
- Students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions.

The National Education Technology Standards *reprinted with permission from the International Society for Technology Education.*

## Program Overview

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Junk food is everywhere. Whether students are dining at school, at home, or with friends, they are often faced with unhealthy options. Advertisements, billboards, and commercials send a damaging message to students: When it comes to nutrition, it is easier (and tastier!) to make an unhealthy choice than a healthy one. Worse, students who try to make healthy choices are often fooled by content labels. Sometimes, foods that seem nutritious are really no better than what we consider junk food.

Poor nutrition can lead to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Sadly, these issues have become rather prevalent in American society. The United States is the most overweight nation in the world, despite being the “best fed.” In order to stay healthy, we need to learn how to read food labels and make wise choices, determine how sugar is “disguised” in food products, and realize how quickly fat and calories accumulate when we snack on foods like chips and cupcakes. Once we understand the effects of the foods we eat, we can begin forming healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Students can find junk food in the following places:

- **Fast food restaurants.** It’s no secret that fast food restaurants are unhealthy, yet they represent a huge industry in America and millions of people flock to them.
- **Convenience stores.** Quick stops are not necessarily the best stops! In *Junk Food Wars*, students will learn how to spot healthy options when they’re on the go.
- **Vending machines and the school cafeteria.** Students usually don’t have to look any further than the cafeteria and the halls of their school for junk food. In this program, students learn how to scour their schools for the healthiest choices.
- **The food pantry at home or at a friend’s house.** Even if some parents frown on keeping junk food in the house, there’s no telling what the rules are in other homes. In *Junk Food Wars*, students learn that it’s ok to politely decline unhealthy options at a friend’s house, and to make suggestions to their parents about keeping the pantry stocked with healthy, delicious treats.

*Junk Food Wars* teaches students about nutrition while helping them determine what foods are made of, how foods impact their bodies, how to make healthy choices, and how to form healthy habits.

## Main Topics

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### Topic 1: The Food We Eat

While there's nothing wrong with indulging in a treat now and then, it's important for students to understand how a diet that consists largely of junk food will affect their bodies now and in the future. In this section, students learn that excessive amounts of junk food can lead to weight problems, and can contribute to illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.

### Topic 2: The Food Guide Pyramid

In this section, students learn that our bodies need five specific nutrients every day in order to function properly: carbohydrates, fats, protein, vitamins, and minerals. The new 2005 Food Guide Pyramid helps students identify the foods that deliver those nutrients, and it promotes daily exercise as a key component of a healthy body.

### Topic 3: Why is Junk Food Junk?

Junk foods might provide us with a quick burst of energy, but these highly processed treats do very little to benefit our overall health. Junk foods are high in unhealthy fats, salts, and sugars, and they deprive our bodies of the nutrients they need to stay active and well. Worse, junk foods are practically everywhere—from vending machines to our own kitchen cabinets—and it can be very easy to fall into the habit of grabbing a quick, unhealthy snack at the first twinge of hunger.

### Topic 4: Make the Right Choice!

Here, students find that the choice is theirs. Even if they're facing a notoriously unhealthy fast food menu, they can decide to order items that are not fried or loaded with sugar. They learn how to seek out their best options, whether they're at home, in the school cafeteria, or standing in front of a vending machine.

## Fast Facts

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- Nutrient-poor junk food makes up more than 30 percent of foods consumed by young people between ages 8 and 18.
- Sixty percent of Americans are overweight, and obesity is now considered an epidemic in the United States.
- More teens than ever before are at risk for heart disease and early onset, type-2 diabetes. Diabetes can lead to other life-long health problems such as kidney disease, blindness, and limb amputations.
- Sugary junk foods can cause many dental problems, including tooth decay and gingivitis.
- Junk foods can deprive us of nutrients that prevent various kinds of cancers, heart disease, and diabetes.
- What we eat today can and will directly affect our bodies 10 and 20 years from now.
- Adequate nutrition helps us perform better in school, sports, music, and other activities, and it can help defend us against common colds and the flu.
- The body breaks down food and latches on to five specific nutrients it needs to perform: carbohydrates, fats, protein, vitamins, and minerals.

- Carbohydrates are necessary for certain brain functions—they help us concentrate, remember, and learn.
- Protein provides amino acids for muscle and hair growth.
- Many vitamins are antioxidants, meaning they guard against the breakdown of chemicals the body needs to thrive.
- Minerals help improve our eyesight, regulate nerve and muscle activity, and whiten our teeth.
- Daily exercise is the key to a healthy body, as it lowers blood pressure, regulates sugar levels, and strengthens the heart, muscles, and bones. Regular exercise also provides energy throughout the day and increases metabolism.
- Saturated fats and too much cholesterol can cause long-term and immediate problems such as clogged arteries in the heart and brain.
- The food industry spends 26 billion dollars a year on advertising, and approximately half of the nutrition-related information is misleading or inaccurate.
- Since carbonated soft drinks are full of sugar and empty calories, they're often referred to as "liquid candy."
- Many boys between the ages of 13 and 18 drink three or more cans of soda a day. Ten percent of them drink more than seven a day. Girls between the ages of 13 and 18 drink more than two cans a day.
- Just one 12-ounce can of soda contains 9 to 10 teaspoons of sugar.
- Five servings of fruits and vegetables every day will supply your body with the nutrients it needs to prevent some cancers.

## Vocabulary Terms

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**aerobic activity:** Any kind of movement that results in a marked increase in heart rate and respiration. Swimming, dancing, and soccer are all types of aerobic activity.

**arteries:** A part of the circulatory system that carries blood away from the heart.

**blood glucose level:** The amount of glucose, or sugar, in the blood.

**carbohydrate:** One of the five main components of food and the body's main source of energy. There are two main types of carbohydrates—simple and complex.

**complex carbohydrates:** Starches that the body slowly converts into glucose, providing for long-lasting energy. Complex carbs include grains such as rice and barley, whole grain breads and pastas, beans, nuts, and some vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, and potatoes.

**diabetes:** A condition in which the body does not use insulin properly, resulting in high levels of blood glucose.

**dietitian:** A diet expert who helps people make healthy eating choices that are appropriate to their age, weight, and health status.

**epidemic:** A wide-spread problem that affects many people.

**fats:** One of the five main components of food. Fats help our growth rate and give us healthy skin.

**fiber:** Plant matter that helps the digestive process.

**glucose:** A sugar that serves as a major energy source for the body.

**heart disease:** A variety of problems that occur when the heart and blood vessels aren't working the way they should.

**junk food:** Food that has few nutrients. Junk food often contains a lot of fat, sugar, and salt. Potato chips, candy, and soft drinks are all considered junk food.

**minerals:** Like vitamins, minerals help the body to grow, develop, and stay healthy. The body uses minerals to perform many different functions—from building strong bones to transmitting nerve impulses. Some minerals are even used to make hormones or maintain a normal heartbeat.

**nutrition:** The study of food and how it works in the body.

**obesity:** The condition of having an excessive percentage of body fat. Being overweight can affect a person's ability to walk, run, and do simple everyday tasks.

**protein:** A component of food that builds up, maintains, and replaces the body's tissues. Some sources of protein include beef, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, tofu, nuts, seeds, and legumes such as black beans.

**simple carbohydrates:** Sugars that the body rapidly converts into glucose, providing quick but short-lived bursts of energy. Simple carbs are found in milk, fruit, candy, soft drinks, and products made from refined (white) flour, such as white bread and pastas.

**veins:** A part of the circulatory system that carries blood to the heart.

**vitamin:** Substances that are found in foods we eat that help the body function, grow, and develop properly. There are many types of vitamins and each has a special role to play. For example, vitamin D helps bones stay strong while vitamin C boosts the body's ability to heal itself.



## Pre-Program Discussion Questions

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1. Do you eat a lot of junk food? What percentage of your diet consists of junk food?
2. Where do you find most of the junk food you eat?
3. Do you discuss food and meals with your parents? With your friends?
4. Do you think you are a healthy eater? Why or why not? What do you think you could do to improve your eating habits?
5. Does what you eat affect how you feel during the day?
6. Do you exercise or participate in any other physical activities to stay healthy?

## Post-Program Discussion Questions

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1. Before the program, I asked you to tell me how much junk food you eat. Based on the video, would you change your answer now? Why or why not?
2. What can you do to improve your diet?
3. Were you surprised to learn that certain foods are considered junk foods? Why?
4. Did you think Travis's discussion regarding healthy eating habits was effective? What might he have done differently? Do you think you could have a similar positive impact on your friends? How?

## Group Activities

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### A Plan for Your School

Divide your students into groups of four. Ask each group to think of a project that would endorse healthier eating at school. Then, ask a representative from each group to present their idea to the class. Write their ideas on the chalkboard, and provide feedback on how that plan could be carried out effectively.

Ask students to vote on the suggestion they like best. Then, ask each group to compose a letter to the principal outlining a method in which that suggestion might be carried out in the school.

### Food Choices—Fruits and Vegetables

Divide your students into groups of three or four. Give each student a blank sheet of paper and ask them to individually list the fruits and vegetables they like best, and the fruits and vegetables they like least. When they are finished with their lists, ask the students to compare their lists with the rest of the group and answer the following questions:

- Do the students have similar tastes in fruits and vegetables?
- How are the fruits and vegetables they like best generally prepared?
- How are the fruits and vegetables they like least generally prepared?
- If fruits and vegetables were prepared in a different way, do students think they would like them better? Do they have any suggestions regarding new ways fruits and vegetables can be prepared?

When students have finished this task, ask a representative from each group to share their favorite and least favorite fruits and vegetables. Next, ask them to describe new and interesting ways in which fruits and vegetables can be prepared and incorporated into their diet.

## **To the Cafeteria!**

Take your class on a “field trip” to the school cafeteria. Ask them to make two lists: one of healthy food choices in the cafeteria and one of unhealthy choices.

When you return to the classroom, ask your students the following questions:

- Is there a discrepancy between the amount of healthy choices and the amount of unhealthy choices? If so, in what way?
- How can the cafeteria replace unhealthy options with nutritious foods that the students will actually want to eat?

Ask students to be completely honest—if the cafeteria provided healthier foods, would they select them? Why or why not?

After students have answered these and any other relevant questions, ask them to write three to five paragraphs about independent measures they can take to improve their diet in school if officials do not take action toward improving cafeteria options.

## **Individual Student Projects**

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### **How Well Do You Eat?**

Ask students to keep track of everything they eat over the course of a weekend. Then, ask the following questions on Monday:

- How often do you snack during the day?
- Are your snacks generally healthy (e.g., fruits and nuts) or unhealthy (e.g., chips and candy)?
- How many servings of fruits and vegetables do you eat every day?
- Do you tend to eat a lot of fried, greasy foods such as fast foods?
- How do you feel after you eat something that is heavy and unhealthy?

Discuss the answers to these questions with the class and ask for suggestions on how students can make better diet decisions when they’re at home or with their friends.

### **Count the Ads**

Ask students to keep track of the television commercials they see for restaurants and food items over the course of the week. At the end of the week, ask them to create a bar chart that shows the number of commercials they’ve seen for the following:

- Fast food restaurants
- Frozen foods
- Ice cream
- Candy
- Salty snacks, such as chips and pretzels
- Cookies
- Other, healthier foods such as yogurt, whole-grain cereals, breads, and bottled water

At the end of the week, ask students to present their bar charts and discuss the results.



## The One-Week Challenge

Have each student write three to five paragraphs on specific things they can do to reduce the amount of junk food they eat. Then, challenge students to put that plan in action for one week. At the end of the week, ask students the following questions

- Were you able to stick to your plan? Why or why not?
- How did you feel at the end of the week?
- Do you think you can continue this plan for longer than one week?

Elaborate on students' answers and ask questions where necessary.

## Internet Activity

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### Count Your Calories

Have students write down everything they eat for a day. Then, ask them to go to [www.thecaloriecounter.com](http://www.thecaloriecounter.com) and calculate the number of calories they consumed. When they have finished their calculations, ask students to write a one to two-page paper regarding the results. The paper should address the following questions:

- Are you surprised by how many or how few calories you consume?
- What made up the bulk of your calories?
- Can you identify changes that should be made to your diet?

## Assessment Questions

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**Q:** What are junk foods?

**A:** Junk foods are foods that provide few of the nutrients that our bodies need.

**Feedback:** Junk food often contains a lot of fat, sugar, and salt, and can make us feel sluggish and tired. Potato chips, candy, and soft drinks are all considered junk food.

**Q:** Name the two types of carbohydrates

**A:** The two types of carbohydrates are simple and complex.

**Feedback:** Complex carbohydrates provide greater nutritional value and provide lasting energy.

**Q:** What are three of the five main components of food?

- (a) glucose, fats, and proteins
- (b) proteins, fats, and carbohydrates
- (c) proteins, fats, and fiber
- (d) glucose, fats, and fiber

**A:** (b)

**Feedback:** The five main components of food are proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals.

**Q:** Where do students typically find junk food?

**A:** According to the program, students can find junk food in fast food restaurants, convenience stores, in their school's cafeteria and vending machines, at home, and at their friends' homes.

**Feedback:** Junk food is everywhere. It's up to students to make the right choices regarding nutrition.

**Q:** Name three possible health issues that can arise from eating too much junk food.

**A:** Answers will vary, but may include tooth decay, diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

**Feedback:** Although junk food can be very tasty, it's important to consider the immediate and long-term negative effects it can have on your health.

**Q:** Which vitamin aids the development of strong bones?

**A:** Vitamin D aids the development of strong bones.

**Feedback:** Vitamin D is added to most milk, which also contains calcium to help bones and teeth stay healthy. Other sources of Vitamin D include fatty fish such as salmon, and sunlight.

**Q:** Name three examples of complex carbohydrates.

**A:** Answers will vary, but may include oatmeal, whole wheat bread, brown rice, kasha, barley, peanuts, chickpeas, and whole wheat pasta.

**Feedback:** Complex carbohydrates provide long-lasting energy and contain fiber.

**Q:** Junk food deprives us of the nutrients that help prevent

- (a) cancer
- (b) heart disease
- (c) diabetes
- (d) all of the above

**A:** (d)

**Feedback:** Junk food is not only lacking in vitamins and minerals, it also deprives our bodies of the nutrients needed to ward off illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

**Q:** What we eat today will not necessarily affect our bodies in the future. (*True or False?*)

**A:** False

**Feedback:** What we eat today can and will affect our bodies 10 and 20 years down the road.

**Q:** One 12-ounce can of soda contains 9 to 10 teaspoons of sugar. (*True or False?*)

**A:** True

**Feedback:** Due to the large quantity of sugar and empty calories in soda, it is often referred to as "liquid candy."

## **Additional Resources**

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### **WEB SITES**

#### **Ask The Dietitian**

[www.dietitian.com](http://www.dietitian.com)

#### **Center for Science in the Public Interest**

[www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)

#### **Healthy Eating Pyramid**

[www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

#### **No Junk Food**

[www.nojunkfood.org](http://www.nojunkfood.org)

#### **United States Department of Agriculture**

[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

## United States National Agricultural Library

www.nal.usda.gov

### BOOKS

#### **Over It: A Teen's Guide to Getting Beyond Obsession With Food and Weight**

Carol Emery Normandi & Laurelee Roark

New World Library, 2001

ISBN: 1577311485

#### **Food Facts for Teenagers: A Guide to Good Nutrition for Teens and Preteens**

Margaret Belais Salmon

Charles C. Thomas, Publisher Ltd, 2002

ISBN: 039807352X

#### **Healthy Cooking for Kids: Building Blocks for a Lifetime of Good Nutrition**

Shelly Null

St. Martin's Griffin, 1999

ISBN: 0312206399

#### **Good Enough to Eat: A Kid's Guide to Food and Nutrition**

Lizzy Rockwell

HarperCollins Publishers

ISBN: 0060274344

#### **Food and You: A Guide to Healthy Habits for Teens**

Marjolijn & Sharon Zoumbaris

Greenwood Press, 2001

ISBN: 0313311080

#### **Ultimate Weight Solution for Teens: The 7 Keys to Weight Freedom**

Jay McGraw

Free Press, 2003

ISBN: 0743257472

#### **Diet Information for Teens: Health Tips about Diet and Nutrition (Teen Health Series)**

Karen Bellenire (Editor)

Omnigraphics, 2001

ISBN: 0780804414

### Other Products

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#### **Nutrition for Teens**

- VHS

Which foods can make you feel happy, sad, lazy, or sleepy? A registered dietician answers that and other questions as she identifies the nutrients needed to meet the physical, mental, and emotional demands of adolescence. Healthy eating habits are distinguished from unsafe forms of dieting, and the causes, symptoms, and side effects of eating disorders are delicately confronted. A supplement, containing the video's goal and objectives as well as multiple-choice quizzes and answer keys, is included. (25 minutes)

Item # 32580 • [www.cambridgeeducational.com](http://www.cambridgeeducational.com) • 1-800-468-4227

## **Let's Do Lunch**

- DVD/VHS

"Who has time?" "I don't need the calories." "A double bacon cheeseburger, fries...now that's a good lunch!" Sound familiar? Grab your students' attention with Let's Do Lunch and show them why that second meal of the day is vital to their health and academic performance. Covers childhood obesity and related conditions, the basics of balanced nutrition, good and bad cholesterol and different types of fat, and how to start making healthier food choices. Dieticians and an athletic trainer add their stamp of authority, while savvy teens offer quick, easy, healthy, and delicious lunch and snack ideas. Break the fast food, junk food, no food habit!

*Correlates to the National Health Education Standards and the National Standards for Family and Consumer Science Education.*

Item # 32741 • [www.meridianeducation.com](http://www.meridianeducation.com) • 1-800-727-5507

## **Body Image: Let's Get Real**

- VHS/DVD/Digital On-Demand

"Who you are is how you look." The media's glorification of an arbitrary physical ideal has precipitated an identity crisis for millions of today's teens, both male and female. This penetrating program explores the unhealthy impact that the media, peer pressure, and family opinions can have on adolescents' perceptions of their bodies. Individual testimony on media stereotyping, eating disorders, self-esteem, balanced nutrition, and sexuality provides a candid overview of the relationship between body image and self-identity, while suggesting healthy ways to improve self-image.

Item #10603 • [www.cambridgeeducational.com](http://www.cambridgeeducational.com) • 1-800-468-4227



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