

Factoring Fast Food

Overview:

Responsibility means taking care of oneself as well as one's obligations, and good nutrition is essential for a healthy and productive life. This lesson allows teens to examine some of the fast food they regularly consume, consider its nutritional value (or lack thereof), and contemplate how to make healthier choices and develop responsible eating habits. This lesson is also an excellent foundation for a discussion of health risks associated with poor diet.

Materials:

- Nutrition information from local fast food restaurants
- Many fast food restaurants have brochures with nutritional information available if you request them. You can either pick of several beforehand, or use websites like www.fast-food-nutriton.info that supply this information.
- Fast Food Nutrition Chart
- Food Pyramid
- Health Portions
- Taking Charge of your Health (for Teens)

Handouts:

- [Fast Food Nutrition Chart](#)

Procedure:

Part I

1. Ask students what they typically eat at their favorite fast-food restaurant. Have them write down a typical meal or what they usually order.
2. Using the nutritional information (either that you have brought in or that is available online), have them fill out the nutritional information for one meal. Remind them to pay attention to how a portion is defined. (For example, nutritional information for pizza generally refers to one slice.) This part could also be assigned as homework.
3. Once they have completed the chart, ask them to point out how their favorite meal meets or goes over the daily recommended nutritional allowance.

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Part II

1. Discuss the food pyramid and the components of a healthy diet.
2. Explain portions size, and help students practice estimating it. For example, for most vegetables, the standard serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. So is a tomato on a cheeseburger a serving of vegetables? How many slices of pizza would one have to eat to get $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup of tomato sauce? Use the Healthy Portions worksheet as a guideline.
3. Have students return to the fast-food meal and assess how many of the daily requirements it fulfills using the “Your day In Nutrition” chart. Does it cover approximately one third of the requirements?

Part III

Discuss the following:

1. What percentage of your daily allowance of fat, sugar, and carbohydrates are in the meal you chose from the fast-food restaurant?
2. Can fast food be part of a healthy diet?
3. Going back to the fast food nutrition information, what is one change you could make to lower the fat, sugar, and cholesterol at your favorite fast food restaurant?
4. What are some of health problems caused by a diet high in fat, sugar, and carbohydrates?
5. How could you encourage family and friends to make healthier choices when eating at fast-food restaurants?

This lesson is part of a regular feature in Josephson Institute’s [Character Educator blog](#).

Related Websites:

- [Fast Food Nutrition Information](#)
- [Taking Charge of Your Health for Teens](#)
- [Healthy Portions](#)
- [Food Pyramid](#)

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McREL standards

Self-Regulation

Standard 3. Considers risks

Benchmark 4. Uses a balance sheet to evaluate the costs and benefits of various alternatives within a decision

See more at: <http://charactercounts.org/lesson-plans/>