

Tips For Media-Smart Parents

Throughout the Media-Smart Youth program, youth will bring home *Tips for Media-Smart Parents* handouts. These handouts will highlight what they are learning about media and the connection to health, nutrition, and physical activity. Knowing about these topics can help you make healthy nutrition and activity choices for you and your family.

What did your young person learn in Lesson 1: What Is Media-Smart Youth?

Here's how to put it into action at home:

He or she:

- Learned about the purpose, topics, and structure of Media-Smart Youth.
- Created a working agreement.
- Explored ways to include vegetables and fruits in daily eating.
- Discussed how to maintain a healthy body by feeding it nutritious foods. That means giving it all the nutrients and other good things it needs to grow and develop while staying within calorie needs. Media-Smart Youth focuses on a few types of foods that health experts agree are really important for youth: vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and calcium-containing foods.

- Learn about Media-Smart Youth by visiting <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/msy>.
- Consider creating a working agreement when your family has a big task to do or a big decision to make.
- Think of vegetables and fruits as an essential element in all meals and snacks.
- Try fruit on top of cereal or in fat-free or low-fat yogurt at breakfast.
- Have a veggie-rich salad at lunch or dinner.
- Try a vegetable sauté at dinner (sauté five or six different kinds of cut-up vegetables in a little olive oil until they are crisp-tender).
- Snack on vegetables and fruits (try cherry tomatoes or grapes!).
- When thinking about vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and calcium-containing foods:
 - Choose them more often.
 - Have them every day.
 - Know that they will help you stay healthy and feel good.
 - Know that calcium will help keep your bones strong.
- Try new vegetables and fruits that you've never tried before. For ideas, visit: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/tips/index.html>.

Ask your young person to tell you about one or more strategies he or she really liked for eating more vegetables and fruits. Try them at home!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 2: Asking Questions?

Here's how to put it into action at home:

He or she:

- Learned about the three main purposes of media—to persuade, inform, and entertain. Knowing the purpose helps us to be more aware of how media are used and how they may affect our choices.
- Explored how every media product conveys a point of view held by the author or sponsor. Knowing who the author or sponsor is can help explain the type of information the sponsor is trying to share with you. You may also hear the term “creator,” which often refers to someone creating digital media (such as someone who creates their own video to post online).
- Learned that young people ages 11 to 14 spend an average of 8 hours and 40 minutes a day using media. When media multitasking is included, media use shoots up dramatically to a total of nearly 12 hours in a typical day. This is more time than young people spend doing anything else except sleeping.

Source: Foehr, U. G., Rideout, V. J., & Roberts, D. F. (2010). *Generation M²: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

- With your young person, think critically and identify the purpose of different types of media that are commonly used in your home (such as books, TV shows, the Internet, or cell phones). Keep in mind that many media keep us busy but not necessarily active.
- When you use media, keep an eye out for advertisements and try to identify the author or sponsor of the advertisements.
- Think about the connection between media and health. For example, many media advertisements promote foods that are high in solid fats and added sugars and that do not have much nutritional value.
- Brainstorm ways to keep your family active or to replace some media use, such as going on a family walk instead of watching TV.
- Try to limit the amount of time the people in your home spend using media. You can start with small changes, such as limiting time using media after school or work.

Ask your young person to share the acronym he or she learned to help them identify the purpose of a media product. If needed, provide a hint—the three letters spell out the name of a common dessert.

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 3: Asking Questions?

He or she:

- Discussed how to analyze media using the 6 Media Questions. Using this set of simple questions helps us think critically about media and better understand what is being communicated.
- Learned that media producers typically create media with a specific target audience in mind. A target audience is a specific group of people that a creator of media is trying to reach. Members of a target audience usually have something in common, such as their age, gender, or interests.
- Explored many reasons that media products are targeted to specific audiences. One media product cannot appeal to everyone. Media producers research their target audience to figure out what will attract that group to their media product. By focusing on what matters most to a target audience, producers can create media that are more appealing and meaningful to the audience and are more likely to be successful.

Here's how to put it into action at home:

- Use the 6 Media Questions to help you become a more active and thoughtful user of media.

The 6 Media Questions:

1. Who is the author or sponsor?
2. What is the purpose?
3. Who is the intended audience?
4. What is the message?
5. What information is missing?
6. What techniques are used to attract your attention?

The next time your young person uses media, such as watching a favorite TV show or reading an interesting article online, ask him or her to answer the 6 Media Questions about that show or article.

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 4: Nutrition Know-How...Eat It Up?

He or she:

- Learned about whole grains and ways to choose whole-grain foods in daily eating:
 - Whole-grain foods have more fiber than many refined-grain foods do. They also include other important nutrients. Whole-grain foods can help keep us healthy.
- Discussed the importance of cutting back on solid fats and added sugars:
 - The total amount of fat you eat is important. Some is good; too much is not. Knowing how fats are found in foods can help you make smart choices. The type of fat you eat makes a big difference. Most of the fats in our diet should be oils. However, much of the fat that Americans eat today is solid fats.
 - Added sugars are those added to foods during processing or preparation. Even though our bodies process natural and added sugars in the same way, foods that have naturally occurring sugars also tend to have more nutrients than do foods that are high in added sugars.
 - Solid fats and added sugars have calories but not the nutrients young people need to grow and develop. Cutting back on foods and drinks high in solid fats and added sugars gives room in a young person's daily eating to enjoy foods that provide nutrients and fiber.

Here's how to put it into action at home:

- When you're at the grocery store, read the ingredient list and Nutrition Facts label:
 - To make sure you're choosing whole grains:
 - Look for "whole" or "whole grain" to be first in the ingredient list.
 - Look for fiber on the Nutrition Facts label; many whole grains have 3 grams or more.
 - Solid fats will be shown on the Nutrition Facts label as saturated fat and trans fat.
 - The ingredient list shows sugar-type words, such as high fructose corn syrup or sucrose. Foods and drinks with these words on the ingredient list and that are high in sugars on the Nutrition Facts label are high in added sugars.
- Increase whole grains and cut back on solid fats and added sugars:
 - Try some new whole grains at family meals:
 - Whole-wheat pancakes or oatmeal for breakfast
 - Whole-wheat bread for sandwiches at lunch
 - Bulgur or brown rice at dinner
 - Choose low-fat choices, such as fat-free or low-fat milk instead of whole or 2% milk, extra lean ground beef instead of regular, and lower calorie salad dressing instead of regular.
 - Choose low-added-sugar alternatives, such as water instead of soda.
 - Make foods high in solid fats and added sugars, like pizza, chicken nuggets, chips, soda, ice cream, granola bars, and baked goods (cakes, pies, cookies) a "sometimes treat," not an everyday choice.

Ask your young person to tell you about one or more strategies he or she really liked for eating more whole grains or for cutting back on solid fats and added sugars. Try them at home!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 5: Motion Commotion: What Is Being Active?

Here's how to put it into action at home:

He or she:

- Discussed that physical activity is anything that gets your body moving. Physical activity is more than just traditional sports or structured exercises. It includes all kinds of activities, including sports, such as football and basketball, and activities that are a routine part of the day, such as walking and climbing stairs. These activities can be slow, fast, easy, hard, simple, complicated, done alone, or done in a group.
- Learned that health experts recommend doing 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity daily. This activity should include aerobic, muscle-strengthening, and bone-strengthening activities.
- Explored ways to make physical activity a natural part of daily life.

- Do regular physical activity with your family. Start with small steps. You don't have to do 60 minutes of physical activity each day right away. Instead, start with 5 or 10 minutes a day and work up to 60 minutes slowly, over time. If you start with realistic, small steps, you are more likely to stick with doing regular physical activity and take greater steps to be more active over time.
- Choose activities you and your family enjoy so you can have fun while being physically active together.

Ask your young person to tell you his or her favorite creative ideas for being physically active. Try them together at home!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 6: Visiting a Grocery Store?

Here's how to put it into action when you go shopping:

He or she:

- Identified serving size, fat, fiber, and sugars on the Nutrition Facts label.
- Applied information about fiber, solid fats, and added sugars content from the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list to choices in breakfast cereals, breads, and milk and milk products.
- Explored the produce section to see what vegetables and fruits are available.

- Look at the picture of the Nutrition Facts label. Find serving size, fat, fiber, and sugars.
- In the breakfast cereal section, look for cereals that are higher in fiber—that means choosing whole wheat- or oat-based cereals rather than corn- or rice-based cereals. Compare grams of sugar on the label and choose cereals with less sugar.
- In the produce section, try a variety of vegetables and fruits, especially brightly colored ones (red, yellow, orange, purple, green) because they are full of vitamins, minerals, and other things that help keep us healthy. (In addition, look for frozen, dried, and canned vegetables and fruits.)
- In the bread section, look for breads that are made from whole grains and that have 3 grams of fiber or more in each slice.
- In the milk and milk products section, choose fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese.

These days, most foods in the grocery store come in one kind of package or another. Use these same label-reading and package-reading skills throughout the store to make smart and healthy choices for your family.

Take your young person to the store with you and practice your label-reading and package-reading skills together. Then bring home some delicious and healthy foods to enjoy!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 6: Visiting a Grocery Store?

Here's how to put it into action when you go shopping:

He or she:

- Identified serving size, fat, fiber, and total sugar on the Nutrition Facts label.
- Applied information about solid fats, fiber, and added sugars content from the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list to choices in breakfast cereals, breads, and milk and milk products.

- Look at the picture of the Nutrition Facts label. Find serving size, fat, fiber, and total sugar.
- In the breakfast cereal section, look for cereals that are higher in fiber—that means choosing whole wheat- or oat-based cereals rather than corn- or rice-based cereals. Compare grams of sugar on the label and choose cereals with less sugar.
- In the bread section, look for breads that are made from whole grains and that have 3 grams of fiber or more in each slice.
- In the milk and milk products section, choose fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- In the produce section, try a variety of vegetables and fruits, especially the brightly colored ones (red, yellow, orange, purple, green) because they are full of vitamins, minerals, and other things that help keep us healthy. (In addition, look for frozen, dried, and canned vegetables and fruits.)

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 7: The Power of Advertising?

Here's how to put it into action at home:

He or she:

- Learned about the power of advertising and its influence on food choices. Food advertisements targeted at youth often promote foods that are high in solid fats and added sugars more than they promote vegetables and fruit, whole grains, and foods that are low in solid fats and added sugars.
- Explored ways that advertisements tend to influence young people's perceptions of body image. The body types shown in the media can create unrealistic expectations for people about how their bodies should look. Actors and models get a lot of professional help to look the way they do. They spend a lot of time with hairstylists, make-up artists, personal trainers, and clothing consultants.
- Investigated the subtle advertising technique of "omission" and created a 30-second radio ad for granola bars using this technique. Advertisers need to include information in their ads that will persuade people to buy or support their product, service, or ideas. As a result, they often omit undesirable, yet important, facts about a product from their messages.

- Encourage your young person to choose nutritious snacks, such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, as opposed to the foods mostly advertised on TV. Put this skill into action during your next trip to the grocery store!
- Think about the body types shown in media you and your youth experience on TV, online, in print, in the grocery store, and in other places. Remind your youth that although the body types shown in the media may be a positive motivating force to achieve healthy goals, such as athleticism and fitness, the media often portrays extremes that are not realistic.
- The next time you are exposed to TV or radio ads, ask your young person:
 - Does the ad tell you the full story about the product?
 - What information is missing?
 - Would knowing about the missing facts change your mind about wanting the product?
- Try to point out "omission" on product packaging the next time you and your young person are at the grocery store.

Ask your young person to present his or her 30-second radio ad and show you new yoga poses you can try together at home!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 8: Super Snacks and Better Bones?

Here's how to put it into action at home:

He or she:

- Discussed the difference between serving size and portion. A serving size is a standardized amount of a food, such as a cup or a slice. Serving sizes are found on the Nutrition Facts label. A portion is the amount of food a person chooses to eat at one time.
- Explored how food packages are a form of advertising. The packaging can affect how much of a specific food a person chooses to eat. Just because a snack is sold in one package, and the serving size is listed as "1 package," does not mean that a person should eat all of it at one time.
- Learned that a calcium-rich diet and weight-bearing physical activity help build strong bones and teeth, and help prevent bone loss and fractures later in life. Weight-bearing activities are any activities in which feet, legs, or arms are supporting most of a person's weight, such as running, hiking, dancing, or climbing stairs.
- Discussed sources of calcium, such as fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, almonds, dark-green leafy vegetables, and beans. Some foods, such as soy drinks, orange juice, and breakfast cereal, also are fortified with calcium.

- Read the Nutrition Facts label before you eat packaged foods. Look at the serving size listed and decide if the serving size is right for you.
- Choose small portions of foods that are high in solid fats, added sugars, and calories. Many snack foods that are high in solid fats and/or added sugars also are high in calories and low in nutrients. Eating the whole package means that a person is consuming a lot of calories, solid fats, and added sugars without getting needed nutrients.
- Choose calcium-containing foods and drinks every day.
- Look at the calcium %DV on the Nutrition Facts label of foods. Keep in mind that many adults need 1,000 milligrams of calcium a day, and young people ages 9 to 18 need 1,300 milligrams a day because they are still growing.
- Pick a weight-bearing activity to do today. You'll be doing something great for your bones and your overall health!

Ask your young person to tell you about one or more ideas he or she really liked for getting enough calcium and for weight-bearing physical activity. Try them together at home!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 9: Making Smart Choices Fun and Easy?

Here's how to put it into action at home:

He or she:

- Identified things that make it easier for us to be physically active and things that make it harder for us to be physically active. Once we understand the things that help us be active, and the things that stand in our way, then we can see how to make changes so that we have more helpers and fewer obstacles. Changes like these can help us make smart choices.
- Discussed the difference between a specific action and a general action. When we are trying to change our behavior, it is important to identify specific actions we want to take. For example, rather than saying we will be more physically active (a general action), we should strive to say that we will do something like playing basketball with a friend once a week (a specific action). Specific actions let us know exactly what we are supposed to do and help us see the progress we are making toward a goal.

- Make a list of the obstacles that make it harder for you and your family to be active. What solutions can you come up with to address some of the obstacles?
- Create a list of things that make it fun and easy for you and your family to be active together. Use this list to help you identify specific actions you want to take to be more active (see bullet below).
- Identify three specific actions you would like to take with your young person (or your whole family) to help you be more physically active. Make a list and set some specific dates and times. The more specific your plans are, the easier it will be for you to do them and to see how much you are accomplishing together. Add new ideas to your list on a regular basis. Have fun!

Ask your young person to tell you his or her ideas for making physical activity fun and easy. Try them together at home!

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What did your young person learn in Lesson 10: Getting Into the Production Mode?

He or she:

- Developed a “creative plan” for the group’s *Big Production* using the 6 Media Questions from a production point of view. A creative plan is a tool or action plan that professional media producers use to make decisions before they start an actual media project.
- Discussed the three main phases of production: preproduction, production, and postproduction. These phases are the 3 Ps of Production:
 - Preproduction includes all the steps taken to prepare for a production, such as determining a message or organizing supplies.
 - The production phase includes all the activities involved in creating a production, such as writing, designing, or taking pictures.
 - Postproduction includes activities to complete a production, such as editing, and activities to promote the production, such as advertising to your community.
- Creating media can involve a lot of people—such as your young person and his or her peers—who all play different key roles in each phase.

Here’s how to put it into action at home:

- Ask your youth how the group used the 6 Media Questions from a production point of view to create their *Big Production* plan. Try creating a small-scale “Family *Big Production*,” such as a poster or short video, to help members of your family practice creating media and thinking about how media are made.

To get started, pick a nutrition or physical activity goal that you would like to work on as a family, and answer the questions below to create your plan. (Hint: the answer to the first and third question is: your family!)

The 6 Media Questions:

1. Who is the author or sponsor?
2. What is the purpose?
3. Who is the audience you are trying to reach?
4. What is your message?
5. What information are you leaving out?
6. What techniques are you using to attract attention?

- Once you’ve answered the questions, you have a plan in place. Now, decide who will play the roles needed to create your family media product. Be creative and have fun!

Ask your young person for help in developing your “Family Big Production” plan and creating your family media product!

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