



FOOD & FUN AFTERSCHOOL, SECOND EDITION

UNIT 4

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY FATS

GO FOR GOOD FATS!

A NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CURRICULUM
DESIGNED TO HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP HEALTHY
HABITS DURING OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

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ABOUT FOOD & FUN AFTERSCHOOL, SECOND EDITION

The Y is not only one of the nation's largest providers of childcare and afterschool programs—but we are also determined to be the healthiest. As part of our commitment to young people, the Y has adopted a set of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards for early childhood and afterschool programs nationwide. The standards will build a healthier future for our nation's children by providing healthy environments rich in opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity and by supporting families to do the same at home.

The **Food & Fun Afterschool** curriculum is an ideal way to achieve the HEPA standards through activities and lessons designed to be easy to incorporate into your regular afterschool program schedules. Food & Fun includes 11 teaching units that encourage healthy behaviors through active play, literacy, math skills development, creative learning, and hands-on snack time activities. With more than 70 activities to choose from, the lessons make it simple to promote healthy eating and physical activity in your program every day! Food & Fun also gives you tools for engaging families in their children's health.

THE Y'S HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Implement an educational program for parents and child care providers with physical activity and nutritional information relevant to the health of their children.
- Ensure that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day (for full-day programs), including a mixture of moderate and vigorous physical activities that promote bone and muscle strengthening.
- Play will take place daily outdoors whenever possible.
- No access to television or movies.
- Limit digital device time to less than one hour per day. Digital device use is limited to homework or programs that actively engage children in activity.
- Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal.
- Serve all meals family style.
- No fried foods.
- Offer water at the table during every meal and have water accessible at all times.
- Serve beverages that do not have added sugars.
- Serve healthier beverages, including water, lowfat (1%) or nonfat milk, or 100% fruit juice (no more than one 6- to 8-oz serving per day).

The HEPA standards are based in part on years of research supported by collaborations with the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), University of Massachusetts at Boston, the Healthy Out of School Time Coalition (HOST) and the National Institute for Out of School Time (NIOST). Through these collaborations, as well as the experience of Ys across the nation, the Y has learned the most effective ways to create healthy environments in out-of-school time settings.

Additionally, the Institute of Medicine's Early Childhood Obesity Prevention policies, the National Afterschool Association's "Standards for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Out of School Time Programs" and the Let's Move Child Care Standards played a significant role the HEPA standards.

Teaching about healthy behavior is most effective when your program environment is consistent with the HEPA standards, which are supported through the Food & Fun curriculum. The Food & Fun materials were created by the Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity in collaboration with YMCA of the USA. In addition to afterschool programs, these materials are appropriate for use in a wide variety of out-of-school time programs, like summer camps, sports programs, extended day programs, and before school programs.

For more information on the HEPA standards, visit [Exchange](#). All Food & Fun materials, including parent engagement tools, tip sheets on implementing the HEPA standards, snack recipes, and can be downloaded on [Exchange](#). For more resources from the Harvard School of Public Health, visit www.foodandfun.org or www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/.

UNIT 4

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

BEHAVIOR GOAL

Children will choose foods with healthy fats when possible.

KEY MESSAGES FOR KIDS

- You need to eat fat to keep your body healthy, but not all fats are the same. Try to choose fats that are good for your body.
- Fats from fish, nuts, and seeds are healthy for your body.
- Limit fats from animal sources, like butter, whole milk, and red meat.
- Do not eat trans fats, which are found in fast food like french fries and baked goods like cookies.

KEY INFORMATION FOR PROGRAM STAFF

Fat is a tricky subject for children (and adults) to think about. Children, especially older ones, often associate “fat” with body image, and they do not think about it in a positive way. When you introduce this unit, inform the group that fat is simply one of three energy sources that we get from food (carbohydrates, protein, and fat all give us energy for the body to work). We **need** to eat fat for energy, to help us feel full, and because it provides nutrients like vitamin E. Our bodies need fat for nerve function, healthy skin, and to protect our organs (fat acts like a cushion). **Having some body fat is normal and healthy.** However, we need to be careful about the type of fat we consume.

Before participating in the activities in this unit, children should have some understanding of the difference between “Go” foods with healthy fats and “Slow” foods with unhealthy fats. Explain that healthy fats are plant fats (like nuts or olive oil) and fish oils, or have lower saturated fat (like lowfat milk). Fats that are not healthy are saturated, like fat from animals (butter, red meat, and whole milk), and trans fats (found in processed snack foods, margarine, and many fried fast foods like french fries). See the box on page 5 for more information on the different types of fats.

When discussing food fats with children, keep in mind that younger children in particular will have difficulty understanding the difference between healthy and unhealthy fats. Try partnering older children with younger children so they can help with these concepts.

You can also discuss food choices with children and encourage them to find healthier options at lunch or when they are eating out. As you explore the different types of healthy fats, try to incorporate foods that are relevant to the lives of the children you serve. Take time to talk to kids about how the food they eat at home is prepared and help them identify when they are eating healthy vs. unhealthy fats. Don't forget, the best way to influence healthy habits among children is for you to be a positive role model by offering healthy snack options (and eating them, too!).

It is important to **avoid** suggestions of “dieting” to children at this age. You may need to remind children that you are discussing food fat as it relates to healthy eating, and not as it relates to body fatness. We do not want children to interpret this topic as suggesting that they are “fat” or need to lose weight. Though some children may be overweight, neither this unit nor the **Food & Fun** curriculum are designed for weight loss. Also **avoid** the suggestion that lowfat diets will help children stay slim or lose weight. Food fats are not turned directly into body fat; they have functions in the body as noted above. When people gain too much weight, it is because they eat more calories from *any* type of food (calories come from carbohydrates, protein, and fat) than they use for exercise and basic body functions (including growth and development).

Encourage children to be active for the fun of it and to choose foods that taste good and keep their bodies healthy. *If weight is a real concern, it is up to the parents to work with the child's doctor and a dietitian on a health plan.*

Refer to the “Choosing Healthy Fats” tip sheet on [Exchange](#) for ideas on how to get trans fats out of the snacks served at your afterschool program. Also see www.foodandfun.org for additional resources.

KEEPING TRACK OF FATS

Unsaturated fats are healthy fats. These fats are found in plant oils (like olive oil and vegetable oil), nuts, and fish. Unsaturated fats help lower the “bad” (LDL) cholesterol in the blood.

Saturated fats come from animal sources like dairy products (for example whole milk and butter) and red meat. Coconut and palm oils are also saturated fats. Saturated fats raise LDL cholesterol and can lead to heart disease and diabetes. Since whole milk is a major source of saturated fat in children’s diets, one easy way to lower their intake of unhealthy saturated fat is to offer skim or 1% milk.

Trans fats are created from plant oils through a chemical process called *partial hydrogenation* that makes them solid at room temperature. Trans fats are commonly found in stick margarine, fast foods, and processed baked goods like cookies, crackers, and other snack products. Trans fats are bad for your health and should be avoided. Buy snacks for your program that have 0 grams of trans fat on the nutrition label. But, also check the ingredient list! By law, products labeled as “0 grams trans fat” are still allowed to contain up to 0.49 grams of trans fat per serving. Look for the words “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” in the ingredient list; this means the food has trans fat.

ACTIVITY OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN



ACTIVE GAMES

1. Warm Up, Cool Down: Do this whenever the children are active
2. Grab the Healthy Fats: This relay-type tag game helps children sort foods by healthy vs. unhealthy fats



OTHER GROUP GAMES OR ACTIVITIES (CAN BE USED IN CIRCLE TIME OR SMALL GROUPS)

1. Food Label Mosaic: Be creative with food labels and grocery circulars
2. Track the Trans Fats: Children review food labels and identify the healthier option based on trans fat content of the food



SNACK TIME IDEAS

1. Salsa Fresca (Fresh, Homemade Salsa): Serve with guacamole—avocados are a great source of healthy fats!
2. Awesome Granola: No trans fats here!
3. “Migas” Crumbs: A traditional Hispanic snack with no trans fats
4. Taste test ideas: Taste lowfat milk or cheese, make “silly” popcorn, or taste healthy fats like olive oil with whole wheat bread

These recipes are also in the “Recipe and Taste Test Packet” on [Exchange](#).

CONNECT WITH PARENTS

KEY MESSAGES FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- The types of fat in the foods you eat are more important than the total amount.
- Include “good for you” fats found in fish and plant sources like vegetable oils (such as olive and canola), nuts, and seeds.
- Limit saturated fats found in butter, whole milk, and red meat.
- Avoid trans fats found in fast food, packaged baked goods like cookies and muffins, stick margarine, and any food with “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” or “shortening” in the ingredients list.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS

It is important to engage parents and caregivers on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that you can engage parents at afterschool:

- Have a conversation with parents and caregivers at pickup
- Create a bulletin board with the key messages from each Food & Fun unit
- Involve parents and caregivers in daily physical activities and snack time
- Hold regularly scheduled events each month
- Hand out the “**Choosing Healthy Fats**” section of *Food, Fun & Family* to share with parents how to read a label to look for trans fats!
- **Offer healthy trans-fat-free snacks at pickup.** Serve trans-fat-free whole grain crackers or popcorn at pickup time for parents and caregivers to try with the kids. Display a box of crackers or popcorn with trans fat and show adults how to find trans fat on the nutrition label.

Refer to the parent handouts and parent communications, available in English and Spanish on [Exchange](#), to reinforce the messages in this unit of Food & Fun:

- **Parent handout:** “Dietary Fats: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.” Send this handout home in a mailing, insert it into your next newsletter, or have copies available for pick up at your program’s sign-out area.
- **Parent communications:**
 - Newsletter article: “Go for Healthy Fats!” Insert this into your program newsletter.
 - Email message: “Healthy Habits Power Tips: Fats in Foods.” Email this message to parents and caregivers at the start of this unit.

RESOURCES



WEBSITES

Harvard School of Public Health publishes an online nutrition news and resource center.

www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/

The Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity works with community partners to design, implement and evaluate programs that improve nutrition and physical activity, and reduce overweight and chronic disease risk among children and youth. The Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center offers additional materials and resources on nutrition and physical activity on its website.

www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/

Let's Move is First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative to provide parents with the support they need to make healthy family choices, provide healthier school foods, help kids to be more physically active, and make healthy, affordable food available in every part of the U.S.

www.letsmove.gov/index.html

Alliance for a Healthier Generation is a joint venture between the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation with a mission to reduce the nationwide prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015 and to empower kids nationwide to make healthy lifestyle choices.

www.healthiergeneration.org

Action for Healthy Kids is a nonprofit and volunteer network fighting childhood obesity and undernourishment by working with schools to help kids learn to eat right, be active every day and be ready to learn. Their website includes tools and fact sheets about childhood obesity, nutrition and physical activity.

www.actionforhealthykids.org/

The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's Health Media created KidsHealth to provide families with doctor-approved information that they can understand and use.

Includes sites for parents, children, and teenagers and provides a variety of health information, including nutrition and fitness topics. Also available in Spanish.

<http://kidshealth.org>

Trans free America is a campaign by the Center for Science in the Public Interest to eliminate trans fats from the food supply.

www.cspinet.org/transfat/

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has an interactive website that provides information about the MyPlate food guidance system (formerly the Food Guide Pyramid) with specific information on each food group, which can be tailored for individual needs.

www.choosemyplate.gov/

The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (National Institutes of Health) offers a national childhood obesity prevention program, Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition (We Can!), which provides families and communities with helpful resources.

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/

WEBSITES FOR KIDS

The BAM! (Body and Mind) program, of the CDC, provides tweens with tips on nutrition and physical activity. Children can explore the over 30 physical activities, including the necessary gear and how to play. They can also find great ideas for healthy snacks and meals.

www.bam.gov

KidsHealth also has websites especially for kids, in English and Spanish.

<http://kidshealth.org>

ChooseMyPlate.gov has a page of activities and materials for kids ages 6 to 11. It includes a Blast Off Game as well as kids' posters and coloring pages.

www.choosemyplate.gov/children-over-five.html

The Center for Science in the Public Interest produces "Smart Mouth," a site created for older children to find out fun facts about food and the food industry. It includes a scale that allows people to see how many calories and fat are in various fast food meals.

www.cspinet.org/smartmouth/index1.html