



FOOD & FUN AFTERSCHOOL, SECOND EDITION PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

UNIT 4: FATS IN FOODS

ABOUT PARENT ENGAGEMENT

At the Y, we understand that making a difference in children’s health means involving families. Engaging with families in afterschool time is associated with increased family involvement in children’s education and school, improved relationships between parents and children, and improved implementation and outcomes for afterschool programs*.

This tool contains parent engagement activities, a newsletter article, and an email message for you to use with Food & Fun unit 4. These tools are intended to help you connect with and educate parents and caregivers on the key messages in Food & Fun. (You can find all the Food & Fun resources on [Exchange](#).)

It is important to engage parents and caregivers on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that programs have engaged families 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, like a family night

*Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School. A joint publication of United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Harvard Family Research Project, and Build the Out-Of-School Time Network.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Experiment and be creative—come up with your own ideas or modify the activities below to engage parents and caregivers at your afterschool program!

- Hand out the “**Choosing Healthy Fats**” section on page 7 of **Food, Fun & Family** to share with parents and caregivers 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 families to try out with their kids. Display a box of crackers or popcorn with trans fat and show adults how to find trans fat on the nutrition label.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Use this article in your organization's publications. Be sure to include the credit "Provided by Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity and YMCA of the USA."

GO FOR HEALTHY FATS!

This month our program will focus on fats found in foods. The **type** of fat you eat is much more important than the **total amount** of fat in your diet!

The key messages for adults are:

- The type of fats in the foods you eat is more important than the total amount.
- Eat "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.
- Limit fast food to no more than once per week when you really need the convenience.

The key messages we'll be teaching kids are:

- 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 found in fast food like french fries and baked goods like cookies.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING AND HEALTHY FATS

UNSATURATED FATS – "The Good"

Eat more of these!

What: Oils found in plants and fish.

Where: Vegetable oils like olive and canola oil, fish, nuts, seeds, peanut and other nut butters.

SATURATED FATS – “The Bad”

Eat lowfat or nonfat dairy and lean meats

What: Fats found mostly in animal foods.

Where: Whole milk, cheese, butter, ice cream, red meat, sour cream, lard, coconut and palm oils.

TRANS FATS – “The Ugly”

Avoid these!

What: Vegetable oils that are chemically changed to increase the shelf life of processed foods.

Where: Fast foods, packaged snacks (cookies, crackers, etc.), baked goods, and stick margarines.

For more information, check out www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/fats.html.

EMAIL MESSAGE

Use this sample message to communicate with parents and caregivers by email.

SUBJECT: Healthy Habits Power Tips: Fats in Foods

Dear *(insert program name)* Parents and Caregivers:

This month the *(insert program name)* will be doing several fun activities with your children that teach them about fats in foods.

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Use these **Healthy Habits Power Tips** to help you select and prepare foods with healthy fats. Pick one tip that you want to try right away, and **go for it!**

- **Choose lowfat dairy** (1% or skim milk) when you shop and order out. Milk is the biggest source of saturated fat for children, so you can make a big difference with this one change. Children under 2 years old should continue drinking whole milk for proper growth and nutrition.
- **Minimize fast food eating.** Foods served in fast food restaurants are often high in unhealthy saturated and trans fats. Save fast food eating for when you *really* need convenience.
- **Read labels** when you purchase foods to avoid products with *trans* fat. Look for 0g *trans* fats AND read the ingredients to avoid foods with “partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.” Many manufacturers are reducing or eliminating them from their products.
- **Cook with liquid oils** (high in unsaturated fats), not butter (high in saturated fat), stick margarine, shortening, or lard (all high in *trans* fats).

To learn more about choosing foods with healthy fats visit www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/fats.html. For more information on the health effects of *trans* fats, and which food products are *trans* fat free, click on www.BanTransFats.com.