Red Light Green Light Healthy Snacking

Grade Level:
Grades 1-3

Objectives:
• Children will learn to make healthy food choices when planning a snack
• Children will learn which snack and items are healthy and which snack items are only special treats by utilizing the “red light, green light” teaching method
• Children will demonstrate their ability to make healthy choices by completing the “Red Light Green Light Snacking” activity worksheet

Materials:
Red light, green light paddles OR have children make an X sign in the air with their index fingers for red and an OK sign with their fingers for green light.
Snack food flash cards OR a list of red light and green light snacks that the teacher had seen are typical snacks brought in by children.
“Red Light Green Light Snacking” activity worksheet

Plan
The beginning of the lesson will be a group discussion about snacks and what healthy snacks contain or don’t contain. The “red light, green light” activity will follow; each child will be given a red light and green light paddle. They will then be shown food flashcards and asked to identify snack items which are healthy or “green” snacks using their paddles and foods which are unhealthy or “red” snacks.

Time Frame:
30-45 minutes

Parent Handout:
Please access our parent take home handout entitled: Nutrition Know-How for Parents: Grab-N-Go Snacks” at www.blythedale.org/eat-well-be-well/parent-handouts

Teacher Follow-up
Interested in taking today’s lesson about healthy snacking one step further?

Start a list of green light snack items as they are brought into class each day. For instance, if a child has brought in carrot sticks and dip ask the class if they think carrots are a “green light snack” and then add the item to your running list. Remember to keep this activity positive by only identifying green light snacks.
Content:

Today we are going to talk about the importance of knowing the difference between eating a healthy “snack” vs. eating a tasty “treat.” Both snacks and treats can play a part in our day and we can be very healthy eating both but we need to understand how many times a day and why one is not as healthy as the other for us!

Our taste buds begin the process of digestion as well as send signals to our brain telling us whether we like or dislike a food. Some foods taste so incredible when we eat them! Both healthy and not so healthy foods can taste good to us. Our brain will usually tell us that foods high in sugar, fat or salt taste great! Our body does not need to eat foods high in sugar, fat and salt very often because if we eat a lot of them over time they can make us unhealthy. These types of foods are foods that our body “wants” because they taste good to us but are not foods that our body “needs” to be healthy. These foods are known as “treats.”

How many times a day, do you think that it is recommended that we have a treat? The answer is one time a day on most days!

If we give our body more than one treat a day on most days then over time we are not going to be eating enough of the healthy foods that our body needs. A food that our body “needs” gives us nutrition that makes us healthy and keeps us feeling good throughout the day. Foods that our body needs are called healthy “snacks.” Healthy snacks typically come from nature or the farm, such as fruits, veggies, whole grains, nuts, seeds and low-fat dairy. Treats are usually made in the factory.

Some people choose to have a treat every once in a while and some people choose to have a treat once a day. Both can be healthy choices but it is up to us to keep track of our treats—how much we eat and how often!

To reinforce this concept, please play a game where children either give food the OK, sign or “green paddle,” to healthy nutritious snacks or the STOP sign (two index fingers crossed to make an X) or the “red paddle” for the treat foods.

Flashcards include:

**Celery & Carrot sticks**—green light—they come from nature, are packed with vitamins and minerals that keep our body healthy. We should all eat 5 servings or 2-3 cups of vegetables a day! 5 a-day is the Healthy Way!

**Strawberries**—green light- eating lots of colorful fruits and veggies helps us to get all the important vitamins and minerals our body needs each day, 5 A Day is the Healthy Way!

**Fruit Snacks or Fruit Roll Ups**—red light- these are treats- they are very high in sugar, contain artificial colors, do not grow in nature and contain little if any real fruit.
**Water**—green light- our bodies are designed to drink water. We really don’t need any other beverage. We should drink mostly water each day.

**Milk**—green light- milk has lots of calcium which is good for growing strong bones. 90% of our bone mass- or what makes are bones strong and healthy is built during childhood. It is important kids get the right amount of calcium and build up their bones.

**Fruit punch and fruit juice**- red light- our bodies don’t need any juice. We should eat fruit not drink it. Most juices are very high in sugar. The recommendation for juice is to drink no more than 1 small cup (6 oz) per day. When we do drink juice it should always say 100% juice, which means no sugars were added to the drink.

**Banana**—green light- bananas are high in potassium- a mineral that is good for the heart. They even come in their own packaging!

**Chips**—red light- chips are processed factory foods that are high in unhealthy fat and salt. Many of them contain lots of artificial flavors and colors—think about the orange powder on cheese doodles, cheetos and doritos. Chips do not supply the body with anything it needs.

**Cupcakes**—red light- these treats are high in unhealthy fats and sugar. It’s ok to have a cupcake once in a while to celebrate a birthday or as a special treat, but if we have a cupcake at school, should we have treats again at home later that day?

**Yogurt**—green light- what food group is yogurt in? (Dairy) What is the dairy group important for? (building strong bones). Kids need 2-3 servings from the dairy group to get the calcium they need to build strong bones. Some yogurts are better than others because some have lots of added sugars, flavors and colors—think about the Trix cotton-candy flavored & colored yogurt. These types of yogurt are more like treats, but most yogurt is a good choice.

**Soda**—red light- soda is extremely high in added sugars. Drinking soda on a regular basis can lead to problems with our teeth, gaining too much weight, and heart health.

**French fries**—red light- French fries we get out at restaurants are made with unhealthy fats that are not good for our heart. They are high in fat and salt and when they get cooked in the high temperatures of the fryer almost all of the vitamins are destroyed. Health experts recommend we do not eat fried or fast foods more than once a month. If you make the French fries from scratch at home—for example, cut up the potatoes drizzle them with some oil, sprinkle them with salt and bake them in the oven—these would be green light.