



What's in Your Cereal?

Outcome Area: Healthy Lifestyles

Curriculum Area: Healthy Lifestyles Education

Specific Project(s): Six Easy Bites, Tasty Tidbits, You're the Chef, Foodworks, Fast Foods, YOUth in Motion

Description of Activity: This activity helps youth learn to read food labels to make healthier choices. The activity uses cereal boxes but the activity can be adapted for use with other food labels.

Age Level: 10-18

Group Size: Any

Time Involved: **Preparation Time:** 5 minutes **Activity Time:** 15-45 minutes, depends on number of participants/groups as well as discussion

Materials Needed:

- Assorted cereal boxes with food label
- Pencil and paper

Activity:

- Depending on the number of individuals and available cereal box labels, divide members into small groups or have members work individually.
- Provide each group/individual with a cereal box, pencil and paper. Have members find the food label on the box. Ask these questions:
 - What is the first ingredient listed?
 - What is the second ingredient?
 - What is the serving size?
- Discuss the answers to the three questions. Key points for discussion:
 - On the food label, the ingredient that is present in the largest amount is listed first.
 - Cereals with a whole grain listed first are better choices. A whole grain contains not only the endosperm but also the bran and germ. Whole grains provide fiber which is needed to aid in digesting food.
 - Cereals with a type of sugar listed first or second on the food label may not be the best choice. Sugar may also be listed as sucrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup, maltose, dextrose, honey or may be part of other components such as marshmallows. These are sometimes referred to as hidden sugars.
 - Some cereals will have one cup as a serving; others will have 1 ¼ cup, ¾ cup, ½ cup. This is also a good time to discuss measuring dry ingredients. If you have a box with cereal in it, have youth measure out cereal of different serving sizes.
- Additional discussion topics on the food label include vitamins and minerals and why they are added; calorie differences between cereals; fiber differences between cereals.

Lesson developed by: Susan Hansen, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension from materials in Professor Popcorn, Purdue University

