

TOPIC 9: yourCHOICE

Urge to Splurge?

Skill-Based Outcomes

Preteens who participate in this activity will be able to:

- ❖ Describe hunger cues and how to manage their hunger.
- ❖ Describe why emotions might lead to overeating.
- ❖ Find ways to handle emotional “ups and downs” without overeating.
- ❖ Discuss benefits of not overeating.

Empowerment Messages

- ❖ Paying attention to hunger cues helps you avoid overeating. You don't always have to feel full. It doesn't feel good to be stuffed.
- ❖ Eating too fast can lead to overeating. Slow down so your brain has time to know your stomach is full.
- ❖ Your feelings can affect what and how much you eat.
- ❖ Some people eat to cope with negative emotions. To overcome the urge to eat when you're not really hungry, find other ways to handle your feelings.
- ❖ Not overeating helps you grow at your healthy weight. You'll also feel better about yourself when you control your urge to eat.

Activity Summary

(Icebreaker) **Get Your Juices Flowing!** - Preteens start off with physical activity and other activities that arouse feelings of hunger.

1 *(Afterschool Snack)* **How Hungry?** - To become aware of hunger cues, their afterschool snack offers the chance to judge how full they feel before, right after, and (in the next activity) 20 minutes after eating.

2 **Listening to “Body Talk”** - From this “hunger continuum,” preteens explore satiety and ways to manage feelings of physical hunger without overeating.

3&4 **Emotional “Hunger” and Coping With Eating Triggers** - Preteens explore emotional “hunger,” using a visualization activity, then brainstorm ways to handle emotional triggers without overeating.

(Wrap up) **What's yourCHOICE?** - Each person comes up with personal steps for managing hunger and avoiding overeating.

Getting Ready

● Read:

- ❖ Do You Know...? on the next page

● Display Posters:

- ❖ *Read It Before You Eat it!*
- ❖ *Feed Me!*
- ❖ *Move It!*
- ❖ *FIGHT BAC!*

● Get:

For “How Hungry?” (snack activity)*

- ❖ Ingredients: (Recipe will determine.) Serve with lowfat milk.
- ❖ Equipment: (Recipe will determine.)
- ❖ Table setting: paper plates, forks or spoons, cups, napkins

Note: Have the snack prepared ahead, perhaps with the help of preteen volunteers, so participants can eat immediately after their physical activity.

Use the Hot Apple Wrap recipe suggested here or another appealing snack of your choice, such as bean burritos or tacos, pizza, or wrap sandwiches.

* If your program has been approved to serve USDA’s Afterschool Snacks, the snack served as part of this activity may qualify for reimbursement. For each participant, **serve at least 1 slice of bread and ¾ cup apple slices.**

Hot Apple Wrap

For each serving: Place thin apple slices on a slice of whole-wheat bread. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon cinnamon and sugar mixture. Place on a pan under a broiler, and cook until cinnamon melts. Fold the bread to hold the apple slices together.

For “Wrapping Up: What’s yourCHOICE?”

- ❖ “yourCHOICE” handout** for each participant
- ❖ (Optional) some form of recognition for each participant

** Reminder: Collect handouts for next session.

Tips for Leaders:

Emotions lead some preteens to undereat not overeat. Serious emotional problems may develop into eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia. If you suspect a preteen has an eating disorder, talk to the parents and refer the preteen to a medical professional, social worker, or school nurse or counselor for appropriate professional help. Because the problem is so complex, don’t try to counsel the preteen yourself!

Do You Know...?

What triggers eating? Physical hunger does. If your stomach feels empty and perhaps you feel tired, your body may be saying you need to eat. Ignoring hunger cues can lead to overeating.

Other things trigger eating and overeating:

- ❖ Time of day
- ❖ People around you
- ❖ Places where you are
- ❖ Your moods

Eating to cope with anger, boredom, stress, frustration, depression, or loneliness may help relieve your feelings for a short time. It can also lead to overeating without ever resolving the problems or feelings you had.

How do you eat when you're hungry? You need to listen to your body's hunger cues so you know when you're full or partly full. It's okay to stop eating before you feel totally full.

- ❖ Keep a diary to help you pay attention to when you really feel hungry not just when you eat.
- ❖ Eat slowly so your brain and stomach have time to "talk." There's a gap of about 20 minutes after you eat before you start feeling full. To slow down, take smaller bites, eat foods that take longer to chew, and talk between bites.
- ❖ Stop when you're not hungry anymore and before you feel stuffed. You don't need to clean your plate. You may feel better and more in control if you eat a little less.

Tip: Don't get too hungry. Skipping meals can make you feel so hungry that you overeat later.

What's the problem with overeating? Whether you miss hunger cues or eat to cope with moods, overeating for any reason can lead to weight problems. You may consume more calories (food energy) than your body uses and perhaps make unhealthy food choices (high-fat, low-nutrient snacks). Extra calories get stored as body fat.

Eating to cope with emotional problems may feel good at first. But feeling guilty or stuffed after eating too much isn't good in the long run.

- ❖ You may feel better for a little while if eating distracts you from other things or problems in your life.
- ❖ You may hurt yourself emotionally. Many people feel bad about themselves when they eat too much or know they've made food choices that weren't the best for them. You may feel worse about yourself than you did before eating "what" you thought would help you feel better.
- ❖ More negative feelings can lead to even more emotional overeating.

If you feel stressed, bored, angry, depressed, frustrated, or lonely, what can you do to avoid overeating? Instead of eating, do something positive in exchange for negative feelings:

- ❖ Do something more active by yourself: dance, take a walk, run up and down the stairs, do sit-ups or push-ups.
- ❖ Roller-blade, skateboard, or play some pickup basketball with a friend.
- ❖ Draw or play music.
- ❖ Read a book or magazine.
- ❖ Write a letter or an e-mail message.
- ❖ Write in your journal or diary.
- ❖ Take a shower. Wash your face. Polish your nails. Brush your teeth. Comb your hair.
- ❖ If you're really hungry, pick a food-group snack with less fat and fewer calories. And decide ahead of time how much you will eat.

Tip: Serve yourself small amounts of foods. Frequently eating large amounts of foods leads to overeating. See Topic 3, pages 30 to 32, for more on serving sizes.

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Topic 9 Activities

Getting Started: **Get Your Juices Flowing!**

Start the session with techniques to arouse preteens' feelings of hunger. The success of each activity for this topic (structured session) depends on how hungry the preteens are, how much they enjoy the snack, and how filling it is.

Before eating, have preteens engage in physical activity.

- ❖ **ASK:** What's the benefit of moving more and sitting less? **POINT OUT** that active living also helps them have a healthy appetite, cope with stress and other negative feelings, feel good about themselves, and feel energetic. Refer to Topic 2, page 15, for other benefits of moving more.
- ❖ **Using the *Move It!* poster, have preteens come up with some activity they can do in your center**—something that helps them *do enough, do more, or do plenty*. If preteens filled a “fishbowl” with ideas for physical activities in Topic 2, page D-37, from the computer disk (Additional “Quick” Activities), this is a good time to pull out an idea.
- ❖ **Take about 10 minutes for physical activity.**

Have the snack on the table ready to eat after preteens finish their physical activity. Do talk about the snack before beginning to eat:

- ❖ how good it looks and how great it tastes
- ❖ how hungry you are and how hungry they must be after school

Activity 1: How Hungry?

Use their afterschool snack to help preteens become aware of their hunger cues.

As they cool down from the icebreaker activity, have preteens rate their feelings of hunger before eating their snack.

- ❖ **Describe an imaginary line across the room representing a “hunger continuum.”**
 - *One end:* very hungry
 - *Middle:* hungry
 - *Opposite end:* not hungry at all
- ❖ **Before they eat their snack, (ASK:)** How hungry are you? Have them stand on the appropriate spot on the continuum. Most will be gathered near the “very hungry” end. Encourage them to remember where they stood.
- ❖ **Move the session along to the table with the snack and lowfat milk to drink with it.** Milk helps make the snack more filling.
- ❖ **Give preteens time to wash their hands before eating. Talk about this food safety tip.** Refer to the messages in the *FIGHT BAC!* poster.

Food safety-smarts: When you pack a lunch or snack to take along, keep HOT foods HOT and COLD foods COLD. A thermos or an ice pack will help.

Invite them to enjoy their snack. Give them at least 5 minutes to eat.

Immediately after eating, have preteens rate their feelings of hunger again on the “hunger continuum.” This time, most will be gathered nearer to the middle where they still feel “hungry.” Encourage them to remember where they stood this time.

Activity 2: Listening to “Body Talk”

Challenge preteens to think about when, how much, and how often they eat.

Start with the word “hunger.” **ASK:**

- ❖ How would you describe hunger?
- ❖ How does it feel to be physically hungry? How did you feel when you first put yourself on the “hunger continuum” before eating and after being active?
- ❖ Do you ever feel hungry for emotional reasons—such as boredom, anger, or stress? Do you feel the same as you do when you’re physically hungry? **Talk briefly** about the difference between real physical hunger and craving food for emotional reasons.

(Watch the time so preteens can arrange themselves again on the “hunger continuum” at exactly 20 minutes after they *first started to eat their snack*. Timing is essential.)

Have preteens rate their feelings of hunger for the third time on the “hunger continuum”—now 20 minutes after they *started to eat their snack*. This time, most will be gathered at the other end, “not hungry at all.”

Continue talking about satisfying their hunger. Keep the discussion open-ended so preteens talk freely, and everyone gets a chance to talk.

- ❖ Think about where you put yourself on the “hunger continuum.” How would you compare your hunger feelings *before* you ate, *just after* you ate, and now *after 20 minutes*?
- ❖ Do you feel full now? **POINT OUT** that the word “satiety” means feeling full or at a point of being satisfied with how much food one eats.
- ❖ How do you know when you’re starting to feel satisfied? What cues or signals does your body send to let you know you’re full?

Explore reasons why people overeat and how to avoid it. Talk about:

- ❖ Have you ever gone from feeling hungry to feeling stuffed or too full? How do you feel when you're stuffed? What might happen to the extra calories (food energy) you eat? (*When you eat more calories than your body uses, extra calories turn to body fat.*)
- ❖ Why do people go beyond feeling satisfied, and eat until they're stuffed?
- ❖ **Imagine this situation:** It's 12:30 PM at a fast-food place. You eat a burger and fries in a hurry. At 12:40 PM you're still hungry, so you buy a fruit pie. What's the problem? **POINT OUT:** When you eat too fast, you don't give your body enough time to feel full; that's when you might overeat and feel stuffed. Even if you can eat faster, it takes about 20 minutes to feel satisfied!
- ❖ How can you manage your eating to bridge the time gap before you feel satisfied? **Have them come up with ways** to eat slowly, and listen to body cues to know when they're really satisfied.
- ❖ **POINT OUT** that it's okay to leave food on the plate, and perhaps save it for later that day. **ASK:** Why is it better to save food for later than to eat the extra calories? **Talk about** the feeling that comes with being full but not stuffed.

Activity 3: Emotional “Hunger”

Have preteens explore emotional “hunger” as another reason for overeating. (Oversized amounts—another reason)

Start by asking:

- ❖ Has anyone ever said to you: “Eat something; you’ll feel better”?
- ❖ Who’s done that? How did you feel at the time? **Focus on their emotional reasons.**

Use visualization to start preteens thinking about some ways to cope with the emotional “hunger”—an emotional craving for food.

- ❖ **Close your eyes and imagine:** You’re totally stressed out with a pile of homework that’s due and a big test tomorrow! Your friend needs to talk to you; you just had a big argument that’s upsetting both of you. Your mom’s on your back about your messy room. It’s so messy you can’t find the notes you need to study anywhere. You walk to the kitchen mindlessly, as you decide what to do next. You see a package of cookies and a bowl of apples on the counter.
- ❖ **ASK:**
 - What’s your mood? How do you feel?
 - What will you do once you get to the kitchen?
 - How will you feel after you do that? What are the consequences? Will eating resolve your problems?

Continue exploring this situation. Discuss:

- ❖ **Eating triggers:** Your moods are triggers that can lead you to feel like eating. Everyone has different triggers. **ASK:** What triggers your eating?
- ❖ **Actions:** Emotional triggers lead to actions, such as eating out of stress, boredom, anger, or loneliness, or eating too often, or eating too fast. **ASK:** How do your moods affect your eating?
- ❖ **Consequences:** Satisfying your emotional “hunger” may have positive or negative, short- or long-term consequences. **ASK:** If you eat to satisfy your emotional “hunger,” what might be some of the consequences?
- ❖ How can you apply what we just talked about?

Activity 4: Coping With Eating Triggers

Help preteens come up with their ideas for healthful ways to cope with their moods and negative feelings.

POINT OUT: Sometimes you need to give up some things to get other things you want, such as looking and feeling your best.

ASK: Suppose your moods trigger emotional “hunger.” What can you do that helps you feel good and keeps you in control of your emotions and your eating? Which approach would be hardest for you? Why?

- ❖ Skip food. Do something else that helps you feel good.
- ❖ Eat less food. Have just a small amount. Remind them to use serving sizes on food labels to help with choices; refer to the *Read It Before You Eat It!* poster.
- ❖ Exchange a high-calorie food for another food with fewer calories. Encourage them to use the *Feed Me!* poster for ideas.

Have preteens pair up to brainstorm five things they would be willing to do—besides eat—if they felt bored, stressed, angry, or lonely. Have them share their ideas with everyone.

Wrapping Up: What's yourCHOICE?

Wrap up by making “yourCHOICE” action plans to pay attention to hunger cues and avoid overeating.

Review what they learned about this topic. **ASK:**

- ❖ Why do you need to pay attention to your body's hunger cues?
- ❖ How can you beat hunger without feeling stuffed?
- ❖ Why don't you want to let your emotions control your eating?
- ❖ How can you handle your moods without turning to food?
- ❖ What choices can you make for yourself to keep from overeating? Why? **Talk about the goals and actions** they can take to control how much and how often they eat. (For example, *GOAL: Control my urge to eat when I'm stressed out. Actions: Walk the dog to get away from the kitchen. Eat a piece of fruit instead of a high-fat snack. Eat one cookie not the whole package.*)

On their “yourCHOICE” handout, have each participant write a goal and three steps he or she can take this week to manage hunger and avoid overeating. (Note: At the next session, ask them what actions they actually took.)

Have the participants see how they did with the goal and action steps each person wrote on their own “yourCHOICE” handout for the last topic. They can check (✓) the steps they took so far. (Optional) Each person who took at least one action receives some form of recognition.

Collect their handouts to use in the last session.

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