

Food and Nutrition Lesson Plan: Grade 7

Guide for Educators



Lessons include:

[1: Food Influences](#)

[2: Food Marketing](#)

[3: Beyond Marketing Snack Matrix](#)

Developed by AHS, Nutrition Services in consultation with the Body Image Research Lab at the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education

Overview

This lesson addresses W-7.5 of the Grade 7 [Health and Life Skills Curriculum](#) and was developed using [age-appropriate food and nutrition literacy guidance](#).

Students will:

- List and discuss what influences their individual food choices
- Give examples of food marketing in their daily lives
- Differentiate between the needs implied by food marketing and the actual nutrition needs of adolescents
- Create a snack matrix tool that will allow them to make food choices that better suit their nutrition needs when faced with marketing influences



Teaching considerations: To support students in developing healthy eating patterns, approach food and nutrition education in a way that promotes a [healthy relationship with food](#), recognizes that students may have [varying access to food](#), and [considers potential biases](#) towards food and eating practices.





Teacher Background

There are many factors that shape an individual's thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and behaviours related to food. These factors can have a positive or negative influence on how and what adolescents choose to eat and drink. In part, these can influence whether adolescents meet their nutrition needs.

Adolescents have an increased need for energy and nutrients to support growth and development during this stage of life. The best way for adolescents to get the nutrients they need is to eat meals and snacks that contain a variety of foods, including vegetables, fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods.

By building awareness of the factors that influence food choices, students can be better equipped to select foods and drinks that make them feel and grow at their best.

Additional Sources of Background Information

-  [Nutrition considerations for children and adolescents](#) (Health Canada)
Information on nutrition considerations for children and adolescents.
-  [Nutrients in food](#) (Health Canada)
Information on the nutrients found in food. Please note that any discussion of nutrients should be framed around the positive benefits provided by eating a variety of different foods.
-  [Marketing can influence your food choices](#) (Health Canada)
Information on how food marketing can affect food choices and how to be aware of these influences when making food choices.
-  [How marketers target kids](#) (Media Smarts)
Information on how marketers target kids and ways to encourage children to take action against marketing strategies that are designed to attract this demographic.

Lesson 1: Food Influences

Estimated Time:

20 – 30 minutes

Materials Required:

- Interactive whiteboard or projector
- [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation](#) (slides 1-6)
- [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation \(educator version with notes\)](#)
- [What Influences the Food We Eat? worksheet](#) (optional)

Instructions:

1. Review [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation](#) background information (slides 1-3).
2. **Think-Pair-Share Food Influences Activity** (Slides 4-5): Individually, then in pairs/small groups, consider what influences food choices. Share ideas with the class. Optional: If short on time, brainstorm together as a class.

Internal Influences (Your Body) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunger and fullness • Taste • Appetite • Wants or cravings • Interest or appeal • Senses • Allergies or intolerances • Biology (e.g., cilantro can taste like soap due to genetics) 	Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of food • Celebrations and events • How, when, where food is eaten • Customs and beliefs • Traditions 	Social Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends • Peers • Celebrities • Influencers • Social media
Physical Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability – what parents/caregivers buy and what food is at stores in your area • Accessibility • Affordability • Marketing • Product placement • Food packaging 	Psychology (Your Mind) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts • Experiences • Memories • Emotions • Personality • Perceptions 	

3. Food Influences Activity Discussion (Slide 6): Generate discussion with students about the influences identified in their brainstorming activity.

Ask: Is it wrong to have your food choices influenced by the factors we came up with?

Answer: No. Listening to your body, practicing your culture and traditions, and sharing and learning about food from others can all be positive experiences and a way to express who you are. However, factors like food marketing are all around us. Many of the types of foods that companies try to influence you to buy and consume do not help you get what you need for growth and development.

Lesson 2: Food Marketing

Estimated Time:

20 – 30 minutes

Materials Required:

- Interactive whiteboard or projector
- [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation](#) (slides 7-9)
- [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation \(educator version with notes\)](#)
- [Food Marketing vs Food Needs worksheet](#) (optional)

Instructions:

1. Food Marketing Discussion (Slide 7):

Ask: Over the past week have you noticed any food marketing around you? Where and what was it?

Sample answers: Examples where food marketing may have been seen include event sponsorship (seen in event advertising, stadium screens like jumbotron, floors, boards, jerseys, clothing, helmets, equipment), social media posts, product placement in tv/movies, commercials on tv/radio or before watching a movie/online video, content creator endorsements, sides of vending machines, contests, sweepstakes, song lyrics, sponsored posts, etc.

2. Food Marketing vs Needs Activity (Slide 8): Have students complete the [Food Marketing vs Needs worksheet](#) individually or as partners. Optional: If short on time, brainstorm together as a class.

3. Food Marketing vs Needs Discussion (Slide 8-9):

Ask: Let's take a moment to think. Thinking of advertisements you have seen (video or print), what do they tend to imply you need? In other words, what are they trying to sell you beyond just the food/drink?

Sample Answers: To look a certain way, to eat/drink a certain way, to have a particular lifestyle (that you will achieve if you have the product in your life), to be 'on trend,' you need to wear or portray a certain aesthetic or label, that you need this product to be healthy/athletic/cool/successful.

Companies want to make money and have consumers with lifelong brand loyalty. They do this by trying to make you have positive feelings that you associate with their products.

Ask: What do you actually need from food?

Sample answers: Energy (calories) to fuel brain and body functions, body building blocks (carbohydrates, protein, fat), fibre, vitamins, minerals, safety (free of allergens if allergic, not moldy or spoiled), variety.

Food is also an important way to connect us to our culture, beliefs and to each other. Food helps you learn, practice, and preserve your culture and food traditions. The act of preparing and sharing food and meals builds and strengthen relationships. Food can have an important role as a tool to express yourself, your values and your history, along with your culture.

Adolescents need more energy and nutrients to support growth and development. The best way for adolescents to get the nutrients they need is to eat meals and snacks that contain a variety of foods, including vegetables, fruit, whole grain foods, and protein foods. Food is also an important way to stay connected to culture, tradition, beliefs, family, and community.

Lesson 3: Beyond Marketing Snack Matrix

Estimated Time:

30 minutes

Materials Required:

- Interactive whiteboard or projector
- [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation](#) (slides 10-12)
- [Food Influences and Nutrition Needs presentation \(educator version with notes\)](#)
- [Snack Matrix worksheet](#)
- Art supplies (scissors, glue, paint, markers, pencil crayons, etc), flyers and/or online graphic design program

Instructions:

1. Beyond Marketing Snack Matrix Activity (Slides 10-12):

Ask students to design a snack matrix including vegetables and fruits, grain foods, and protein foods. The foods included in the matrix should be foods that they have access to on a regular basis, either at home or in the places that they regularly spend time. If students are feeling stuck, they can start by looking at the [Canada's food guide snapshot](#) to get ideas.

A fourth column is where they can make note of their favourite combinations of the foods they identified, using 2 or more different foods. Examples could include a sandwich or wrap, a smoothie, a noodle bowl, etc. Not all foods that were individually identified need to be found in the combination examples, as students may like to snack on some foods just as they are.

Invite students to get creative and use their art medium of choice. They can draw, paint, make a collage or use an online graphics program to create their own matrix. The purpose of this activity is to have students identify nutritious choices that they can refer back to when deciding what to choose for a snack. This is one tool they can use to push back against marketing influences when making food choices. As part of this activity, students can identify some of the factors that will influence the choices in their matrix (e.g., time, eating at home or packing for away, etc).

Reminder: When teaching children and youth about vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods, it is important to consider what foods students have available to them. When students are coming up with ideas for foods within an activity encourage them to list a variety of the foods they enjoy and can access. This may include different vegetables and fruits (fresh, frozen, canned), protein foods (animal based and plant based), and grain foods (including non-whole grain options).

Not all foods that we eat are found on Canada's food guide. Some of these items, like herbs and spices, add flavour and seasoning. During classroom education your students may provide examples of other foods they enjoy, including foods associated with celebrations (e.g. cake) or highly processed foods. You can help refocus the conversation in a neutral way by using some of the example phrasing here: [Create a supportive environment](#) (Health Canada)

Suggested links for accessing recipes if students ask for ideas:

[Cookspiration](#) (Dietitians of Canada)

[Recipes - Unlock Food](#) (Dietitians of Canada)

[Canada's Food Guide Recipes](#) (Health Canada)

Extension

Have students select a food found on Canada's food guide (a vegetable, fruit, protein food or whole grain food). Have them develop an advertising campaign to encourage other junior high students to eat more of that food. Encourage creativity by asking students to come up with a slogan, an ad, and maybe even a jingle. Invite students to use the medium of their choice – print, billboard, video, audio, etc.

Challenge students to go beyond “because it’s healthy” or “because it’s good for you,” and instead focus on practical and relatable facts about how the food can fit within their day.

Reminder: There are no “good” or “bad” foods. Foods of all types can nourish the body in different ways, whether that is physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Encourage students to select a food found on Canada's food guide to learn about and promote foods that help the body physically grow and develop during this time of life.

Assessment

- Participation in group discussions on what influences what we eat and food marketing (recall and describe information from previously learned information and experiential observations)
- Completion of worksheets (Influences, Marketing vs Needs)
- Completion of snack matrix assignment (produce original work, organize information, present work) – grading rubric recommended



What Influences the Food We Eat?

Brainstorm examples of what influences our food choices.

Body

Mind

Environment

Culture

Social



Food Marketing vs Food Needs

Create a list of what food marketing says you need versus what you need from food.

Food marketing tells me I need...

What I need from food is...



Snack Matrix

List five items in each group of food. Mix and match items from two or more groups of food to create five snack combinations.

Vegetables and Fruits	Protein Foods	Grain Foods	Combinations

My main influences when making food choices are: