An Apple a Day

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An Apple a Day
Level R Leveled Book
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Correlation

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A Snack, Anyone?

If you lived in prehistoric times, a snack might have meant nuts and seeds that you found in the forest. You might have picked wild berries and mushrooms. You might even have found a tasty insect to munch on.

Now, you go to the cupboard, refrigerator, or even a vending machine for a snack. You can select from fruit, bread, cheese, or even soda and candy. Because there are so many choices, the study of food—nutrition—is more important than ever.
How many meals might you eat in your life?

1. Use a calculator.
2. Multiply:
   - 3 meals a day
   - 365 days a year
   - 90 years

Wow! That’s a lot!

Nutrients

A nutrient is any substance your body needs to live, stay healthy, and grow. All of the nutrients you need come from the foods you eat and liquids you drink. This is why it is very important to eat foods that contain the right kinds of nutrients. On the next few pages, you will find out about different kinds of nutrients, what they do for your body, and what foods you can eat to get them.

What Is a Protein?

Proteins make up the building blocks of your body, helping build and repair cells. Proteins are especially important for strong muscles. Foods that contain protein include meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, nuts, and some grains.
What Is a Carbohydrate?

Carbohydrates are the nutrients your body uses to make energy. Some carbohydrates are especially good for you because they give you energy over a long period of time. These are found in foods such as vegetables, many fruits, oatmeal, whole grains, and whole-grain bread. Other carbohydrates, called sugars, create an energy flood followed by an energy crash, which is stressful to your body. These not-so-good carbohydrates include the sweet sugars in candy and the starches in cakes, cookies, white potatoes, bagels, and many breads.

Do You Know?

Type 2 diabetes is a disease caused by too much sugar in the blood. Your body works to move sugars from your blood into your cells, where the sugars turn to energy. Poor eating habits, including eating too many sweets, can increase your risk of diabetes. In some countries, including the United States, type 2 diabetes is increasing at an alarming rate.

What Is a Fat?

Another nutrient your body needs is fat. Fats have gotten a bad rap, but they are essential for building cells, absorbing certain vitamins, and storing extra energy. Fats occur as animal fats in meat and cheese, and vegetable fats in olive oil, nuts, and seeds.

Some fats are better for you than others. Vegetable fats from nuts and seeds are better than animal fats from meat and butter. Fats called trans fats are processed fats in pre-made foods such as snacks, cheese products, fried foods, and desserts. They are often called “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oils. Studies have shown that these fats are not good for the body.
**Vitamins, Minerals, and Water**

Other nutrients include special chemicals called vitamins. Vitamins help control how your cells use energy, and they help your body build the chemicals it needs to see, digest food, and fight diseases.

Your body needs nutrients called **minerals** to help your bones, blood, and other parts grow and function. Minerals also help your brain and nerves send signals to your body. Many people get the vitamins and minerals they need from pills called **supplements**.

Water is also essential for life. It helps you digest food by carrying nutrients to all the cells in your body. It is found in many foods, such as fruits, vegetables, meats, and even bread. But you should also drink six to eight glasses of water each day.

**Calories**

A **calorie** is a bit of energy that you get from food. High-calorie foods can give you lots of energy. But if you eat more calories than your body burns, you will store those calories as body fat. If you eat more calories than you burn over a long time, you will gain an unhealthy amount of weight.

There is a way to keep your body at the proper weight. Balance the calories you eat with the calories you burn through exercise. Desserts usually have lots of calories. So can you have a piece of birthday cake at a friend’s party? Of course! But balance it out with an active game of hopscotch.

Taking water breaks during a long hike is a good idea. High-calorie food (left) can be balanced with exercise (right).
There are many different opinions about what foods people should eat to be healthy. But many people agree that certain foods are good for your health, and other foods are not as good. Every day, be sure to eat protein, complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, and lots of colorful vegetables and fruits. As the old saying goes, an “apple a day” is a good way to stay healthy.

Get to know which kinds of foods you enjoy from each of these groups. Try different kinds of proteins, grains, vegetables, and fruits to learn which ones you like best. And remember that many snack foods that are ready to eat from a bag or box are probably not healthy choices.
Some recipes contain foods from each of the main food groups. Can you match each food above to the right group?

Mmmm . . . tasty!
Nutrition Facts

Look at a box of cereal, a granola bar wrapper, or a bottle of juice. You will probably see a chart like the one below called the nutrition facts. The nutrition facts tell you what kinds of nutrients are in the food.

The first lines of the nutrition facts tell you the serving size, or how much of the food you should eat at one meal or snack. It might surprise you to see that a container, such as a bag of chips or bottle of soda, contains two or more servings. When you eat or drink the whole container, you are getting two servings, with double the calories and nutrients.

How many grams of fat does this tomato sauce have?

The calories are listed below the serving size. This jar of sauce has 70 calories in one serving.

The nutrients are listed under the heading “Amount Per Serving.” The nutrition facts divide fats into saturated and unsaturated, and they divide carbohydrates into sugars and fibers. Saturated fats and sugars are less healthy than unsaturated fats and fibers.

Most nutrition facts also list all of the ingredients in order from most to least. For instance, this jar of sauce is made mostly of tomato puree and tomatoes, and has just a little lemon juice.
It’s a Choice!

Right now, the caring adults in your life make many of your food choices. Your parents may prepare your breakfast and dinner. You may eat lunch in the school cafeteria. Even your soccer coach or your scout leader may provide refreshments for your practices and meetings.

As you get older, you will have more and more chances to select what you eat. Knowing about the types of nutrients will help you stay healthy. You will also need to think about calories. Begin to follow healthy habits now. Eat well, exercise, and drink plenty of water. Keep a happy, positive attitude. It’s a choice!

Adults can help you plan meals and snacks.

Food, water, and exercise: keys to good health
Try This! Smart Eating

You can use the Smart Eating section of this book to plan your meals for a day. Be sure to include healthy foods from each of the three main food groups. If you eat something from a not-so-good list, try to eat something healthy at the same meal, or have another meal during the day that includes healthier foods. And remember to eat a good breakfast each morning. You’ll have energy all day, and you’ll do better in school.

Breakfast ____________________________________________

___________________________________________

Morning Snack _______________________________________

Lunch ______________________________________________

___________________________________________

Afternoon Snack _____________________________________

Dinner ______________________________________________

___________________________________________

Bedtime Snack _______________________________________

Glossary

calorie unit that measures how much energy is in food (p. 10)
carbohydrates nutrients your body uses as fuel (p. 7)
fat nutrient your body uses as fuel, building material, and to store extra calories (p. 8)
minerals chemicals your body uses for many purposes; your body only needs small amounts of minerals (p. 9)
nutrient any substance your body needs to live, stay healthy, and grow (p. 5)
nutrition the study of foods and how your body uses them (p. 4)
prehistoric before recorded or written history (p. 4)
proteins nutrients your body uses as building material and fuel (p. 6)
supplements non-food substances that provide nutrients (p. 9)
vitamins chemicals your body uses to maintain health (p. 8)

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