



Overview

Nutrition Detectives™ is a 90-minute educational program that teaches children 5 clues to make healthful food choices and detect marketing deceptions by using food labels and ingredient lists. It includes a PowerPoint or video presentation, a food demonstration, and a hands-on activity in which children examine food products.

Goals

The goals of this program are to:

- (1) Teach children to make healthful food choices and detect marketing deceptions
- (2) Give them the opportunity to practice what they have learned
- (3) Empower them to share their “detective skills” with other family members

Description

Nutrition Detectives™ is an exciting nutrition program for elementary school students, especially those in grades 3 or 4. It provides a novel, creative, engaging, and efficient way to impart crucial information in minimal time. It shows children how to read food labels and detect marketing deceptions, while learning to identify and choose healthful foods. It has been taught in schools throughout the country.

Nutrition Detectives™ was developed by David Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP, Director of the Yale Prevention Research Center, and his wife Catherine Katz, PhD. The program uses a presentation with colorful cartoons and images to convey the concept of healthful eating and how it can be challenging in our modern environment. The presentation shows children how food packages can be deceptive, and how “Nutrition Facts” labels can be used to make better choices. It provides them with 5 clues to make healthful food choices by using food labels and ingredient lists on packaged foods. The children are taught to look for key ingredients to determine whether a food product is likely to be healthful.

After learning the clues, the children are assigned to teams that take part in a hands-on “spying on food labels” game. Each team searches through a bag of groceries filled with packaged foods. Each bag contains both “clued-in” (healthful) and “clueless” (less healthful) food products. The children work together to decide which foods fit into each category.

The entire length of the program is about 90 minutes. The program can be taught in 1, 2, or 3 sessions to meet the individual needs of each program provider. The video version shows Dr. Katz teaching a student audience in a classroom setting, with special effects used to convey the program’s messages.

Availability

Nutrition Detectives program and evaluation materials are available free of charge from:

- The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center at <http://www.yalegriffinprc.org/>
- Dr. Katz’s website at <http://www.davidkatzmd.com/>
- The Turn the Tide Foundation at <http://turnthetidefoundation.org/>