

Parent Communications— Balanced Diet Theme

Adapted from President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2006, Food & Fun After School Unit 4 Parent Communications.

E-mail Message: Use this sample e-mail message to send *Planet Health* messages home to parents.

Subject: *Planet Health* Tips for Parents: Choose Foods With Healthy Fat

Dear Parents:

This month our class will use the *Planet Health* curriculum to explore the concepts of (insert curriculum goals here), using fat in foods as a case study. Here are the key messages:

- You need fat in foods to give your body the nutrition it needs, to add flavor and body to food, and to keep you feeling full.
- Some types of fat are healthy (unsaturated fat) and some are unhealthy (saturated and trans fats).
- Fast foods are often high in unhealthy trans fat, so choose carefully from the menu.

Use these *Planet Health* tips for parents to help you select and prepare foods with healthy fat. Pick one tip that you want to try right away.

- Choose low-fat dairy (1% or nonfat milk) when you shop and order out. Milk is often the biggest source of saturated fat for children, so you can make a big difference with this one change. Children under 2 years of age should continue drinking whole milk for proper growth and nutrition.
- Minimize fast-food eating. Foods served in fast-food restaurants are often high in unhealthy saturated fat and trans fat. Save fast-food eating for when you really need convenience. When you do need fast food, go to sandwich places with fresh vegetables and lean meats or choose nonfried foods.
- Read labels when you purchase foods to avoid products with trans fat. Look for 0 grams of trans fat *and* read the ingredients to avoid foods with partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.
- Cook with liquid oils (high in unsaturated fat). Avoid butter (high in saturated fat), stick margarine, shortening, or lard (all high in trans fat).

To learn more about choosing foods with healthy fats, visit www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/fats.html. For more information on the health effects of trans fat and which food products are free of trans fat, go to www.bantransfats.com.