

LESSON 4: Nutrition Advice for Maria and Bob

Student Learning Objectives

The students will:

- Distinguish between unhealthy and healthy ways to lose weight.
- Identify the dangers of being underweight.
- Determine how to tell if excess body fat is stored. (Optional)
- Identify unhealthy eating patterns.
- Identify resources for help with weight loss or unhealthy eating patterns.
- Formulate advice for young people who need help for unhealthy eating patterns.

Preparation

- Gather the needed materials.
- Familiarize yourself with the Teacher Reference materials. These materials are recommended as teacher references only.
- If you plan to conduct the Optional Activity, duplicate enough copies of the Student Handouts, How to Measure Your Body Fat–Men and How to Measure Your Body Fat–Women, so that each student will have the one relating to his or her gender.
- Duplicate enough copies of the Student Worksheet, Caring Advice, so that each student will have one.
- Prepare a transparency of the Transparency Master, Warning Signs for Unhealthy Eating Patterns, if one has not been provided for you.
- On the board, write a list of community resources for students who may have concerns regarding their weight and/or dieting. Select community resources from the phone book and national resources from the list in the Introduction to this module and the list in this lesson.
- Display the Nutrition Resource Packets on a reference table.

Materials

Equipment

- Overhead projector and screen

Resources

- Teacher Reference Book: *Update: Eating Disorders* OR pamphlets listed below
- Teacher Reference Pamphlet: *Disordered Eating and Eating Disorders*, American Dietetic Association OR *Eating Disorders: What? Why?*, ETR OR book listed above
- Teacher Reference Pamphlet: *Eating Disorders--They Can Be Treated* OR book listed above
- Teacher Reference Pamphlet: *Eating Disorders: What Everyone Should Know*, American College Health Association OR book listed above
- Teacher Reference Pamphlet: *Eating Disorders*, American Dietetic Association
- Transparency Master: Warning Signs for Unhealthy Eating Patterns
- Teacher Reference Portfolio: *Food Power: A Coach's Guide to Improving Performance*, National Dairy Council
 - Student Handout #4A and B: How to Measure Your Body Fat–Men (Optional)
 - Student Handout #5A and B: How to Measure Your Body Fat–Women (Optional)
- Student Worksheet: Caring Advice
- Poster: Food Guide Pyramid, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Poster: Guide to Good Eating, National Dairy Council
- Nutrition Resource Packets, three

Realia

- Pencils or pens
- Writing paper
- Transparency
- Folders or notebooks (from Lesson 1)

Time: 45 minutes, without the Optional Activity

Lesson Procedure

Introduction: 1 minute

Connect this lesson on unhealthy eating patterns to the previous lesson on healthy weight loss.

1. Discuss with the students:

In our first lesson on nutrition, we discussed how many people compare their body image to idealized body images presented in magazines, on television, or in the movies. In this country, the current popular image calls for women to be extremely thin and men to be muscular.

What benefits are implied if someone fits this ideal image? [The person will be attractive, rich, and/or popular.]

It's important for most of us to believe we are attractive and able to fit in with a particular group of peers. Because of the pressure to fit this image, many people are developing unhealthy eating patterns that not only threaten their health, but also threaten their lives.

2. Tell the students:

In this lesson, we will find out what to do about unhealthy eating patterns.

Activity 1: 5 minutes

Distinguish between unhealthy and healthy ways to lose weight and identify the dangers of being underweight.

1. Write the headings “Unhealthy and Unsafe” and “Healthy and Safe” on the board.
2. Have the students briefly review ways a person might try to lose weight. Record their ideas on the board under the appropriate heading. Encourage students to indicate which heading is appropriate.
3. If the following methods are not brought up by the students, be sure to mention them:
 - smoking
 - laxatives
 - diet pills
 - fasting
 - purging

4. State:

Many people focus on their weight as the best indicator of their fitness and health. More important than body weight is eating nutritious food, exercising regularly, and feeling good.

When a person has too little body fat, due to dieting or other reasons, she or he faces several risks:

- *The person may become very ill if he or she gets sick because there are no energy reserves available if the person is unable to eat.*
- *He or she may have very little energy and tire easily.*
- *He or she probably has severely limited his or her food intake and is not getting enough of the essential nutrients.*
- *Females may have irregular periods, or no period at all.*

Extreme thinness may be a signal of an unhealthy eating pattern, or an eating disorder.

Optional Activity: 3 minutes

Provide information on how to tell if excess body fat is stored.

1. Distribute the Student Handout #4A and B, How to Measure Your Body Fat–Men, to each young man and the Student Handout #5A and B, How to Measure Your Body Fat–Women, to each young woman.

2. State:

Comparing our body weight to a reliable weight chart is one way to gather information to help determine whether or not losing weight should be considered. Another way to gather information is to determine your percentage of body fat. The information and measurements indicated on this handout will help you if you wish to do the measurements at home.

Activity 2: 10 minutes

Identify unhealthy eating patterns and resources which offer help with weight loss or unhealthy eating patterns.

Teacher's Note: Exercise caution in the discussion of eating disorders. Too much emphasis placed on maintaining ideal weight or counting calories and fat grams may further increase the fixation on food and weight for students who have eating disorders.

The goal is to raise student awareness of unhealthy eating patterns and to provide access to resources and treatment options for students who may have problems.

The Teacher Reference book and pamphlets are for teacher use only. They are intended to assist you in identifying students who might need referral for help with an eating disorder. The school counselor, student assistance program, school social worker, or school nurse should be contacted if you have concerns about a student's eating patterns.

1. Lead a discussion with the students using the following questions. Gather their ideas and add the information provided, if necessary:

What unhealthy eating patterns, or eating disorders, have you heard or read about?

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia
- Overeating

What do you know about anorexia nervosa?

Anorexia nervosa is called the “starvation sickness.” A person with this unhealthy eating pattern is obsessed with food, weight, and thinness. He or she often refuses to eat and denies that he or she is hungry. He or she has an intense fear of body fat and weight gain. He or she is never thin enough.

Some warning signs are abnormal loss of weight, depression, moodiness, insecurity, intense fear of being fat or gaining weight, seeing self as fat even when thin, exercising excessively, eating tiny portions, refusing to eat, loss of menstrual periods, avoiding social situations where food is involved, and/or constipation.

What do you know about bulimia?

Bulimia nervosa is an eating disorder involving a person who gorges her or himself, usually on high-calorie foods, and then intentionally vomits or uses laxatives or diuretics.

Some warning signs are large fluctuations in weight; disappearing after eating; feeling out of control when eating; eating enormous meals without gaining weight; feeling ashamed and depressed after eating; irregular menstrual periods; dependence on laxatives, diuretics, or diet pills to lose weight; dental problems due to stomach acid on the teeth; and/or eating secretly.

Often, people with eating disorders alternate between anorexia and bulimia. Eating disorders are particularly prevalent among women and athletes. It is estimated that one in 100 pre-teen and teenage girls (the gender and age group most at risk) will fall victim to anorexia nervosa. One in ten will die from its affects: sheer starvation, heart failure, or suicide from depression. Of those Americans who suffer from eating disorders, between 5% and 20% will die from medical complications.

Why do you think these disorders occur?

Medical experts disagree about the causes of eating disorders. Food itself is not the primary problem. Usually it is caused by other stresses in a person’s life and/or society’s perception of thinness as the perfect body image.

Why do you think eating disorders are more common in young women than in young men?

Magazines, television, and movies portray thinness as the perfect body image for women. It is often implied that being thin is the key to popularity, acceptance by peers, and an exciting social life. However, while more females than males suffer from eating disorders, males are not immune.