

SPOT The Block

Teaching Parents How to Talk to Their Kids about the Nutrition Facts Label

A Manual for
Community Presentations

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/4 Cup (113g)	
Servings Per Container 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 100	Calories from Fat 20
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 2g	
Saturated Fat 1.5g	
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	
Sodium	
Total Ca	
Dietary r	
ars 4	



SPOT The Block

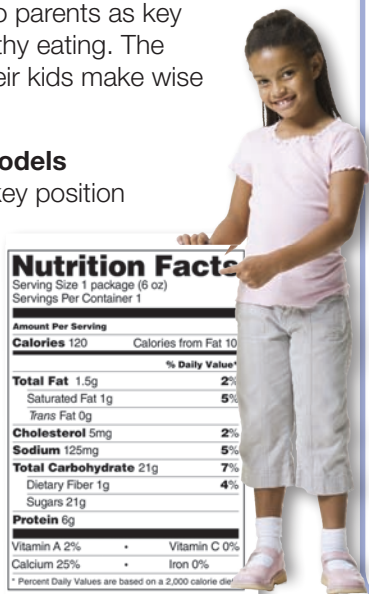
About this Manual

Thank you for your interest in the Food and Drug Administration's **Spot the Block** campaign. This manual will help you spread the word and help families in your community learn to use the **Nutrition Facts Label** ("Spot the Block") to make healthful food choices.

Spot the Block reaches out to parents as key partners in their children's healthy eating. The program helps parents help their kids make wise nutrition choices.

Parents are **influential role models** for their children, and are in a key position to engage their children in a conversation about healthy eating.

This **Manual** will help prepare you for meeting with parents in your community, and getting them on board with the Spot the Block program. Using it will help you help families "get their food facts first."



Planning a Spot the Block Parent Presentation?

The *recommended* structure for teaching parents about this important health topic is:

- **A two-session presentation** for each community group, conducted in two 30-45 minute sessions.
- **15 to 20 parent participants**, all attending both sessions.

Flexible Timing: If preferred, the presentation may also be executed in one session.

Flexible Activities: The family activities shown on Pages 8 – 10 are flexible. If it is not feasible for families to do them at home, you can do the activities on-site using purchased food and beverage products, and/or take a group trip to a supermarket.

Flexible Audiences: While this Manual is offered as a tool for teaching parents, it could also be used with young audiences as needed. With a few modifications in wording, you can easily introduce and execute the activities with **tween/youth groups**.

The Presentation Plan begins on Page 4!

What is Spot the Block?

Spot the Block is a public education campaign designed to help kids (ages 9 - 13) understand the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages...and then use that information to make healthful dietary choices.

Young people are in a transition phase, taking increased care of themselves and making many of their own food choices. Helping them to establish good habits as they are learning to make these decisions can have tremendous long-term impact.

Spot The Block also encourages parents to support their kids' efforts to use the Nutrition Facts Label when making food choices. Together, parents and their children can **Spot The Block** to make informed *decisions* about food choices based upon nutrition *facts*.

National Campaign Elements

For Kids and Parents

- Custom Website at www.fda.gov/spottheblock
- Handout information and materials



Understanding the Nutrition Facts Label

This page outlines the basic messages in the **Spot the Block** program. By becoming familiar with this information along with the Q&As on Page 4, you will have the background you need to teach the program.

1 Check Serving Size

The top of the Nutrition Facts Label shows the **serving size** and the **servings per container**. Checking the serving size is how you figure out exactly how many calories and nutrients you are getting.

- The nutrition information about the food – like the calories, sodium, and fiber – is based upon **one serving**.
- Eating **two servings** of the food results in **double** the calories and **twice the amount** of nutrients, both good and bad. **Three servings** means **three times** the calories and nutrients – and so on.

Spot the Block for...Serving Size!

Food packages often contain more than one serving. The only way to know for sure is to check the serving size on the Nutrition Facts Label!

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/4 Cup (113g)
Servings Per Container 8

Amount Per Serving

Calories 100 Calories from Fat 20

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	7%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	3%
Sodium 460mg	19%
Total Carbohydrate 4g	1%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 4g	
Protein 16g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 8%	Iron 0%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

2 Consider The Calories

When looking at a food's calories, *100 is moderate* and *400 is high*. Challenge tweens to keep track of calories consumed throughout the day.

Note: The food label is based on a 2,000 calorie diet – but an individual's calorie needs can differ. To learn more about "target" calories and to get a customized Daily Food Plan, visit www.choosemyplate.gov.

Spot the Block for...Calories!

How many calories are you *really* getting – 100? 200? 300?

First, determine the **number of servings** you are actually eating of a food/snack. Then, multiply that number by "calories per serving."

That's how you'll know the **total number of calories** you're really eating!

If you eat two servings...

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 100	Calories from Fat 20

x2

3 Choose Nutrients Wisely

Nutrients To Get More Of: Potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium. Encourage kids to choose foods with a **higher %DV** of these important nutrients.

Nutrients To Get Less Of: Trans fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars. Remind kids to choose foods that are **lower** in these nutrients.

Understanding Percent Daily Value (%DV)

The term "daily value" is used to describe the amount of **certain nutrients** that most people need each day. The **Percent Daily Value (%DV)** shows how a food's nutrients fits into an overall daily diet. The general goal is to eat no more than a total of 100% of the recommended amount of each nutrient every day.

Spot the Block for...Nutrients!

- If a nutrient has **5% percent** of the Daily Value or less, it is **low** in that nutrient. *This can be good or bad, depending on if it is a nutrient you want more of or less of.*
- If it has **20% or more**, it is **high** in that nutrient. *This can be good for nutrients like fiber (a nutrient to get more of)...but not so good for something like saturated fat (a nutrient to get less of).*

Community Outreach: Getting Ready

Now that you're familiar with the basic messages of the **Spot the Block** campaign, you're ready to invite parents to learn about this important topic, too! Using the Block to make healthful food choices is something that **every** family can do.

To make this challenge interesting and engaging, the following pages offer suggestions for your presentation. This includes three hands-on, family-focused At-Home Activities that parents can take home and do with their kids.

Learning about the Nutrition Facts Label has never been this fun!

Choose Your Venue

Explore public meeting spaces that offer plenty of room and tables/chairs for participants. Consider:

- Community recreational centers
- Faith institutions
- Libraries
- Local YMCAs/YWCAs
- Schools
- Supermarkets with meeting space

Solicit Participants

- Promote your **Spot the Block** event to sign up 15 to 20 parent participants. Create flyers and posters to alert your audience, or send invitations with an RSVP date.
- Enlist volunteers, such as local nutritionists, to help facilitate an active discussion/give-and-take.
- Reserve optional equipment if desired. For example: computers/computer projection equipment to show the **Spot the Block** website for kids and parents (See *Technology Tips* on next page), or an overhead projector and transparencies to show program materials.

Brief Yourself

- Review this Manual to familiarize yourself with **Spot the Block** and be prepared to answer questions about the Campaign in particular or the Nutrition Facts Label in general. (Also see *More Spot the Block Resources*, next page.)
- See the Questions and Answers section on page 8 for more information. For more on the Nutrition Facts Label, visit www.fda.gov.
- Be sure to keep in mind that The **Spot the Block** program is designed to promote the importance of reading the Nutrition Facts Label. You are not being asked to offer any nutritional advice, guidelines or recommendations. For specific nutrition and/or dietary or health-related questions, refer to:
 - www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines
 - www.fda.gov/LabelMan
 - www.choosemyplate.gov

Shopping Prep

- Shop for snacks and paper goods (see **Materials Needed** on page 6). When choosing snacks, look for those that have “unexpected” serving sizes – for example, a small bag of chips that has 2 or more servings per container.



Planning Your Presentation

If possible, a two-part presentation is recommended. This allows parents to take the activities home, do them with their children, and regroup to share learnings with each other. However, if available time and/or facilities are limited, you could also conduct a very effective training in just one session.

Option 1

Two-Day Agenda

Day 1: 30 – 45 minutes

- Icebreaker Activity
- About **Spot the Block** and the **Nutrition Facts Label**
- Introduction of Family Activities

Day 2: 30 – 45 minutes

- Group share of learnings
- Sharing of resources for continuing to **Spot the Block** at home

See pages 6 - 7 for full two-day outline.

Technology Tips

- If you have access to computer projection equipment, consider projecting the activities for the group. You can find this Manual with activities online at www.fda.gov/spottheblock in the **Grassroots Community Outreach** section.
- Or, if using an overhead projector, print the activities on transparencies.
- You might also wish to set up a computer station and display the **Spot the Block** website: www.fda.gov/spottheblock.

Option 2

One-Day Agenda

If your circumstances only allow time for one presentation, here is a recommended approach:

- Icebreaker Activity
- About **Spot the Block** and the **Nutrition Facts Label**
- Introduction of Family Activities
- Sharing of resources for continuing to **Spot the Block** at home

See *Timing Tip* box, at right.

Timing Tip:

If Doing Only One Session

If you are doing your presentation in only one session, Days 1 and 2 may be combined by removing the Recap/Group Share step. In this situation, you will conclude the presentation after distributing and explaining the Family Activities.

Thank the participants for their willingness and help in teaching their families about the importance of using the Nutrition Facts Label to make informed food choices. Distribute the *Spot the Block Daily Actions* mini-poster, one for each participant to take home to their families, and optional *Parent Tips* and *Tween Tips* if you downloaded them from www.fda.gov/spottheblock.

More Spot the Block Resources:

Learn more about **Spot the Block** by checking out these program resources. These are great websites and handouts to share with families, too!

For Parents:

For online information and printable activities and fact sheets in English and Spanish, visit www.fda.gov/spottheblock and select **For Parents**.

For Community Educators:

Visit www.fda.gov/spottheblock and click on grassroots community outreach to find:

- Downloadable Community Manual
- Handout materials in English and Spanish for Kids and Parents
- Nutrition Label Education materials

Engage and Start to Spot the Block!

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Family Activity Handouts (pages 8 – 10), one for each parent or parent/child team
- Bags and boxes of popular snack food, placed on a front table – at least one per participant
Examples: small-to-midsized bags of potato chips, pretzels, chocolate chip cookies, crackers, popcorn, nacho chips (When displaying the snacks on Day 1, turn the Nutrition Facts Label away from the audience)
- Plates/bowls for dispensing the snacks – one per participant

Time Needed:
35 to 45 minutes

Introduction:

Ask the participants, “Who checked the serving size on a food item you’ve eaten today? How easy is it to know what a single serving is? Why does it matter?”

Now, tell the group that they’ll be taking a closer look at serving size!

Icebreaker Activity:

Spot the Block...When Choosing Snacks

Tell the participants, “Snacks are something we all enjoy, but it’s pretty amazing the way those calories can add up. In fact, let’s try an experiment...”

1. Have each participant select a bag of cookies, crackers or pretzels from the table without looking at the Nutrition Facts Label.
2. Ask them measure out how much they would usually eat for a snack into a bowl or plate.
3. Next, have them “Spot the Block” (check serving size on the Nutrition Facts Label) and measure out an **actual serving** into another bowl.
4. Discuss how the two amounts differ.
5. Have participants count the total calories of what he or she portioned out before knowing what the serving size was.

Ask the group: “Did you have any surprises here? What was the most surprising thing that you learned? Are you going to do anything different from now on?”

Review

That the original portions the participants measured out are probably quite different from the actual serving size for the snack item. Assure the group that most people are surprised to see how much an actual serving of their favorite snack is. The key to Spotting the Block is to check the label *before* portioning out a snack!

- It’s important to point out that all of the nutritional information – such as calories, %DV of total fat, sodium, etc. – are based on **one serving** of that food.
- That’s why it’s critical to check serving size to see how many servings you are *really* eating. For example, if you eat **two servings** – you are getting double the calories, double the fat...double everything.

Without knowing the serving size, it is very easy to take in more calories and fat than intended. What’s more, the sooner parents can impress this important fact upon their children/families, the sooner children will become aware of their own dietary intake.

Family Fun

Activity Introduction

Tell the audience, “In the snack food exercise we just did, you could see how the Nutrition Facts Label can help you uncover the basic facts about what’s inside the package. It’s something great that you can share with your families, too!

To make it fun and easy, we’ve put together **Family Take-Home Activities** for you and your kids to do together. Next time, we’ll talk about your experiences in ‘spotting the block’ with them!”

- Hand out the Family Take-home versions of the Icebreaker (Spot the Block...When Choosing Snacks) as well as the two other Spot the Block activities: Spot the Block...When Packing Lunch and Spot the Block...At the Supermarket. Review each of the additional activities with the participants.

- Tell the group that these easy activities offer simple yet engaging ways that they can help their families Spot the Block and eat healthier. Encourage parents to take time to do the activities at home with their kids. At the next meeting they can share their family experiences with each other.
- Ask them to make note of any comments or revelations their families make as they do the activities together.
- When they come back next time, the group will talk about things they learned, things their families learned, and their general experiences with doing the activities at home.

Remind families to bring the activity sheets back next time.

Materials Needed:

- Flip Chart/Easel and markers
- Copies of *Spot the Block Daily Actions* Mini-Poster/Reproducible
- *Optional:* Copies of Parent Tips and Tween Tips, available for download at www.fda.gov/spottheblock

Time Needed:
35 to 45 minutes

Introduction:

Welcome your group back – and tell them you hope they enjoyed their family **Spot the Block** explorations!

Ask them: “*How did your family like the activities? What words come to mind when you think back on your family doing activities?*” As conversation starts to flow, write their words on the flip chart. For example, you might hear, *calories...serving size...fun...surprised...shocked.*

Recap Activity:

1. Divide participants into 3 groups, one for each Take-Home Activity. (Make sure that those in the groups actually completed that specific activity; if not, switch teams around as needed.)
2. Give each group 2 or 3 sheets of flip-chart paper.
3. Have groups discuss their experiences, learnings, and the feedback their families gave about the activities. What were their family’s most important learnings? How can they keep that healthy eating momentum over time?
For example, they might say: *They learned about how many calories they were eating; they learned their favorite bag of chips is really 3 ½ servings; they learned that the extra-salty pretzels they bought have X%DV of sodium!*
4. Ask them to write these learnings on the paper.
5. Invite one volunteer from each group to recap for the others.
6. Ask the entire group for ideas for taking what they learned and making it part of their daily lives. As a group, make a list of key points that could serve as a future **Spot the Block** action plan; encourage participants to record these ideas and take them home to put into practice.

Closing:

Thank the participants for their willingness and help in teaching their families about the importance of using the Nutrition Facts Label to make informed food choices. Distribute the *Spot the Block Daily Actions* mini-poster, one for each participant to take home to their families, and optional Parent Tips and Tween Tips (if you downloaded them from www.fda.gov/spottheblock).

Remind parents that as tweens continue to Spot the Block, they get better and better at comparing and choosing foods based on nutrition facts. For example...

- They can **check serving size** to see how many servings they are *really* getting
- They can **consider the calories** – number of servings x calories per serving
- They can **choose nutrients wisely**. Remind them to:
 - Get more of these: potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium
 - Get less of these: *Trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars



*It's easy to Spot the Block...
and families can do it today and every day!*

An Important Note About Nutrition Questions:

The **Spot the Block** community outreach program is designed to help you promote the importance of reading the Nutrition Facts Label. You are *not* expected to offer nutritional advice, guidelines or recommendations. For specific nutrition and/or dietary or health-related questions, refer to:

- www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines
- www.fda.gov/LabelMan
- www.choosemyplate.gov

Spot the Block When Choosing Snacks

Any time is a good time to talk about nutrition and healthy eating. More and more children and tweens are spending time alone after school – and you help your kids **Spot the Block** so that they can make good choices when they are choosing their own snacks.



The Activity:

1. Ask your kid(s) to select a bag of cereal, chips, **cookies, crackers or pretzels**. Have them measure out how much they would usually eat for a snack into a bowl. (Make sure they don't peek at the label.)
2. Next, have them **Spot the Block** (check the serving size on the Nutrition Facts Label) and measure out a "serving" according to the Nutrition Facts Label into another bowl.
3. Together, **compare the two portions**. Discuss how the two amounts differ. Are they surprised to see what an actual serving size for this snack is?
4. Figure out the calories of what they typically eat for a snack. Remind them that if they are eating two servings, they will need to **double the calories** per serving to calculate how many calories they are actually eating.

Tasty Tips for Snacks

- Encourage portion control for snacking, and work with your children to measure out the servings for favorite snacks. The snacks can then be portioned out into single servings according to the amount listed as a "serving size" on the nutrition label. Try using individual, snack-size plastic zipper bags.
- Some healthy, filling snack choices are:
 - Baked chips
 - Dried fruits
 - Trail mixes with nuts
 - Low-fat yogurt and low-fat cheeses
- When considering calories, keep this easy range in mind: 100 is moderate and 400 is high.

Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?

2. What did your child say about this activity?

3. What do you think your child learned, if anything?



Spot the Block When Packing Lunch

Lunchtime is a great time to **Spot the Block**. Remind your children to **Spot the Block** in the cafeteria... and make it a family habit when packing lunches.

The Activity:

1. Challenge your children to pack a 600 calorie lunch to take to school or fix at home! Siblings can see whose lunch choices add up to the best choices. Remind them to tally all sandwich ingredients, including condiments!

Ingredient/Item	Calories
Total	

Tips for Building Tasty, Healthful Lunches:

- For foods that come with more than one serving per package, have your children measure out **one serving**.
- Sandwiches can vary in shape and size – so don't limit lunches to traditional breads. Try whole grain tortillas, pitas, and even whole grain English muffins. Fiber is a **nutrient to get more of**, and can be found in lots of whole grain breads. Have your children **Spot the Block** on different types of breads to see how many grams of fiber each contains.
- Spreads and dressing count in the overall calorie tally. **Spot The Block** on the spreads and dressing that your family uses on sandwiches. You and your children may be in for a surprise!
 - Try mustard or hummus instead of mayonnaise.
- Fill your sandwich with lots of “extras” – but make the extras count. Have kids try to pack lunches that include the nutrients to get more of – fiber, Vitamin A and C – and encourage your family to try some of these tasty add-ins to give a sandwich a whole new personality!
 - Crunchy lettuce
 - Sliced tomato
 - Thin slices of cucumbers
 - Chopped red pepper
- Nutrition bars and granola bars are easy and “packable” for a delicious snack, but don't forget to **Spot The Block** on these lunchbox additions. Many of these bars are more like a cookie than a health bar. Choose one that is close to 100 calories and has lot of nutrients to get more of.



Recap Questions:

1. What did you like the best about this activity?

2. What did your child say about this activity?

3. What do you think your child learned, if anything?



Spot the Block At the Supermarket

One of the best ways to get kids interested in what's in their food is to let them participate in the decision-making process. Take them grocery shopping! It's a great chance for them to compare and contrast their favorite foods and "get their food facts first."



The Activity:

- Take your child to the cereal aisle at your favorite supermarket.
- Have him/her Spot The Block to find a cereal that has low sugar and high fiber:
 - Which cereal has the fewest grams of sugar?
Name: _____
Grams of Sugar: _____
 - Which cereal has the highest amount of fiber?
(Remember...5% DV is low and 20% DV is high).
Name: _____
%DV of Fiber: _____
- When you return home, have him/her compare to the cereal you currently have at home.
 - Lowest Grams of Sugar in cereal at home: _____
 - Highest %DV of Fiber in cereal at home: _____

Recap Questions:

- What did you like the best about this activity?

- What did your child say about this activity?

- What do you think your child learned, if anything?



SPOT The Block

www.fda.gov/spottheblock

Daily Action Plan for Kids

1-2-3



1. Check out the serving size.

One package may contain more than one serving. Knowing the servings per container lets you discover the total number of calories and nutrients per package.

2. Consider the calories.

When checking a food's calories, keep in mind that 40 is low and 400 is high. Challenge yourself to keep track of calories you eat and drink throughout the day!

3. Choose nutrients wisely.

Pick foods that are higher in "nutrients to get more of," and lower in "nutrients to get less of."

Get More: Potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium.

Get Less: *Trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars.

A-B-C

A ... is for Taking Action!

- Show off your nutrition know-how! Teach your friends how to **Spot the Block** when choosing snacks at home ... at school ... at the supermarket or at fast food restaurants.

B ... is for Being an Expert Block-Spotter!

- When comparing %DV of nutrients, remember this tip: 5% DV is low; 20% DV is high!
- *Trans* fat and sugar don't have %DV listed on the label, so use grams per serving to compare the *trans* fat and sugar content in foods. Try to eat as little *trans* fat and sugar as possible!

C ... is for Checking Out the Spot the Block website!

- Visit the **Spot the Block** website to get easy Tween Tips and to learn more about the Nutrition Facts Label! Go to www.fda.gov/spottheblock.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 package (6 oz)
Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving	Calories from Fat 10	% Daily Value*
Calories 120		
Total Fat 1.5g		2%
Saturated Fat 1g		5%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 5mg		2%
Sodium 125mg		5%
Total Carbohydrate 21g		7%
Dietary Fiber 1g		
Sugars 21g		4%
Protein 6g		
Vitamin A 2%		Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 25%		Iron 0%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

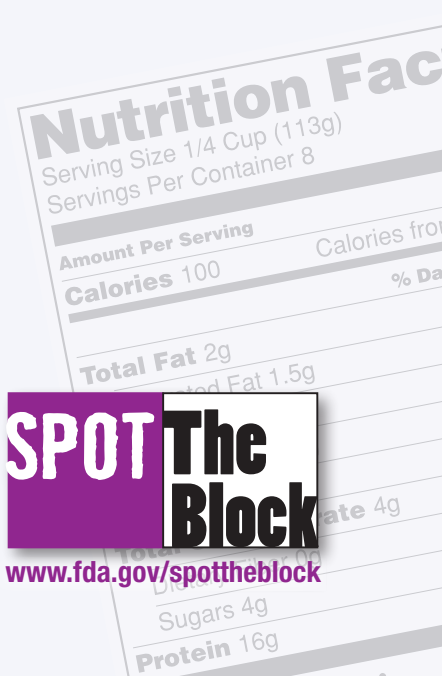


Notes:

The food label is based on a 2,000 calorie diet — but your calorie needs might be different. Get your own Daily Food Plan at www.choosemyplate.gov!



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