

West Virginia WIC's "Learning for Health" Project

Lesson #11

Smart Shopping

This session will focus on ideas for shopping smart, grocery and advertising persuasion and improving shopping planning and skills.

Recommend that printed material for participants be a "smart shopping" pad (tear off sheets with check off list and room for adding additional items).

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, parents/caregivers will be able to:

1. Share one things stores do to increase sales using promotional techniques.
2. Discuss ideas to plan and save money when shopping.
3. Choose one action they will take to improve their shopping selections and save money.
4. Decide whether to use the "smart shopping" pad to plan and shop for food within the next week.

Materials

- Lesson Plan Posters (2)
- Copies of Parent Fact Sheet (1 two-sided sheet)
- Easel, flip chart and colorful markers
- Supplies for activity
- Pencils and/or pens for adults to write if they wish.

Preparation

- Set up room in an informal way - chairs in a semi-circle if possible.
- Hang up the posters so all the group participants can see them easily OR you can attached the posters to an easel and show them at the appropriate time.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and welcome everyone.
- Explain the purpose of the group and the estimated time.
- Have group members introduce themselves.

Discussion Questions

Select your questions from the following list. Depending on the size of your group, you might plan to ask 2-3 questions to engage the group members and foster discussion.

Is there anyone here who LOVES going grocery shopping? What kinds of things do you LOVE about grocery shopping?

Let each participant share a thought or experience.

What are some things you really don't like about grocery shopping?

Again, let participants share some experiences. You may want to briefly list one or two words on the flip chart that "capture" the dislikes.

You can prompt the discussion with:

"What about the time it takes to shop?"

"Do you find yourself buying lots of stuff that you don't use or that you had not planned to buy?"

"Do you wonder whether you got the best buy for your money?"

What are some things a grocery store does to make you want to buy more? Does it work?

Comments may include:

- sale items, coupons, flyers, specials
- specials on certain items - you get used to them and then buy them even if they are not on sale
- Valued customer cards - store discount cards

"Manufacturers spend millions of dollars each year studying you and your children to determine what, where, and why you purchase food items. A large part of supermarkets revenue is generated by impulse buying."

What is "impulse buying?"

- Special "sales" and "two-for-one" offers are examples of marketing techniques designed to get you to make quick buying decisions on the spot. Other techniques like the "special" displays at the ends of aisles and flashy items in the checkout lanes are also meant to get you to buy on "impulse" or when you were not really planning to buy something.
- Impulse buying can be expensive and at times lead to poor nutrition.

What is a brand name product?

- Share two food items (a brand name item and a generic or store brand item) and ask which one they would buy? You can use cheese, cereal, eggs, pasta,
- Why?
- Compare the differences, similarity, and price

"Read labels carefully when choosing a product. Compare prices between brand names and store brands. Generally the store brands are nutritionally equal to a brand name item and are less expensive."

Does packaging make a difference?

- Compare two items that are the same but from different manufacturers, which one catches your eye? Why? Compare the price of both items.

"It used to be that packaging was what the food is wrapped in but now it provides another opportunity for creative advertising. Brightly colored packages with "mouth watering" items printed on the front are also designed to entice hungry shoppers. Health claims are also printed boldly on the front label. The name of the product is also designed to intrigue the imagination for example "the gourmet frozen entrée."

Why are most grocery stores set up the same basic way?

- Think about your supermarket. How is it laid out?
- Where does your supermarket put the flour...bread....milk...produce?
- How long does it generally take you to shop?

"The staples...like bread, milk, meat, and produce are usually spread throughout the store and generally on the outside walls. This means that there are lots of items in between the stuff you really need and more opportunities for impulse buying. The location of items that are marketed to adults are usually on the shelves at our eye level and items marketed to children are at their eye level. Take a close look at the cereal aisle the next time you go shopping. Some of your best buys are up high or down low on the shelves.

Items at the end of the aisle are also designed to catch your eye. Ensure that you compare prices because it may not be a bargain.”

What are some good ways to save money when you shop and make the best decisions?
Does anyone have a tip to share?

List the tips on flip chart paper and share/discussion any of the following tips:

- Plan your meals and snacks for the coming week.
- List the items you need.
- Never go to the store when you are hungry—it is best to go after you’ve had a meal or snack. That way, you won’t be tempted to buy food you don’t need.
- Shop with coupons and look for real specials—read the product comparison labels to make sure you really are getting a good deal.
- Buy fruit and vegetables in season to save money on fresh produce.
- Choose low fat or skim milk and lower-fat cheeses such as mozzarella.
- Buy leaner ground beef (90% lean) when it is on sale and freeze it for a later meal. Look for good prices on skinless chicken.

Activity

- Bring several “sets” of food boxes that have brand and generic/store brand versions. Include information on unit pricing and the actual sale price for each item in the set. You can include “sets” for cheese, cereal, milk, crackers, canned goods, etc. You can put the price information on an address label and stick it to the packaging. Have participants compare the two items (look at the nutrient information, the actual weight, the unit price, and actual price and decide which is the better buy.
- Compare two items that are the same but from different manufacturers (boxes of pasta, boxes of cereal, juices, etc). Which one catches your eye? Why? Which one do you think would catch you child’s eye? Compare the price of both items. This can work into the discussion regarding packaging as a marketing tool. Also relates to the discussion on product placement on shelves - the attractive, colorful packaging with endorsements by kid’s cartoon characters will grab attention (and most likely be more expensive) but may not be the best buy.

Evaluation/Wrap-up

- Here is something that you might find useful. It is a pad of tear-off shopping list sheets. One side has a listing of many of the “staple” foods that you probably get all the time. You can circle the things on the list that you need to get at the store. The other side has room for you to write in all the other things you need.

It seems simple but it really does help you stay focused in the grocery store when you have your list with you. You will be less likely to buy on impulse and you’ll make better choices if you use a list.

- Who would like a shopping pad? (pass out to interested participants)
- We talked about a lot of ideas today. What are you going to try?
- Thank them for coming to the group and participating. Let them know that they can call you or stop by for more information whenever they wish.

Resources:

Some of the information for this lesson was adapted from the Texas WIC Program’s Nutrition Education Program.