FoodChange Nutrition Lesson: Whole Foods vs. Processed Foods

Lesson Title: Whole Foods vs. Processed Foods
Time: 25 minutes

Materials:

- Flipchart
- Markers
- Whole apple
- Apple sauce
- Apple PopTart
- Wheat berries
- Whole wheat flour
- Whole wheat bread
- White flour
- White bread
- Brown Rice
- White Rice
- Rice Cake
- Rice Crispies
- Rice-a-Roni
- Rice Crispies Treat
- Fresh corn
- Frozen corn
- Canned corn
- Corn chips
- Polenta
- Coca Cola
- Dried Beans
- Canned Beans
- Hummus
- Frank and Beans or Baked beans
- Coffee Grinder

Hand Outs:
- Whole vs. Processed Foods

Set Up:
- Write on flipchart: “A Whole Food is:
  - a food that has nothing added to it or taken from it.
  - a food in the form in which nature intended it to be.”

Goal: Participants will choose whole foods over processed foods when given the option.

Objectives:
- Participants will understand how foods are altered during processing.
- Participants will understand the nutritional implications of eating whole versus processed foods.

Introduction:
Welcome everyone to your nutrition session. Today we are going to discuss the difference between whole and processed foods.

What is a Whole Food?
Line up an apple, apple sauce, and apple PopTart on the table. Hold each item up for the group to see.

Let’s start by comparing three foods: an apple, applesauce, and an apple PopTart. Which do you think is the healthiest? Why? Whole apple. Be sure to say that the whole apple has more nutrients, less additives, less added fat, sugar, and sodium.

Out of these three foods, which is the most whole? Which is the least whole? Why?
*Apple- applesauce- Apple PopTart*

What is a whole food?

Display flipchart with definition of whole food on it. Explain that whole is being in the form that nature created it. A whole food looks similar to how it would look in nature.

A whole food is usually a healthy food for the very same reasons you stated earlier. Whole foods don’t have all the additives, fat and sugar added. They also don’t have their nutrients taken away.

What does it mean to be processed? Processing is altering the food from the form it is found in nature. You can hardly tell that these apples were once growing on a tree. Right? Can you see that applesauce is in between these two products in terms of how processed it is? It may not look as much like an apple, but applesauce has just been chopped into fine pieces from a whole apple. It still tastes like an apple, and although it doesn’t look like an apple, you can imagine how it is made from whole apples.

**Activity:**
On each table you will see a variety of products. Take a minute to put the product in order of most whole to least whole. Then, we will come back together to discuss.

Give each group two minutes to put the foods in order. Then ask one person from each table to present their order and state why they put the foods in that order.

Now if I asked you to put them in the order of healthy to least healthy would anything change in your order?

Discuss any changes and answer any questions that come up regarding whole foods.

Distribute the hand out titled Whole vs. Processed Foods.

Here is a hand out that describes various whole and processed foods.

Now let’s take a deeper look at wheat, which is on one of the tables. Each of these products is really made from the same plant- wheat. Each food is different in how much it has been processed. The plant’s seeds are wheat berries. These can be cooked and eaten like rice. Look at the wheat berry. See how it has a brown outer shell? This is called the bran. Lots of nutrients lie in the bran outer coating. If I take these wheat berries and grind them all up, what will I get? *(Take wheat berries and grind them in a coffee grinder).* What does this look like? Yes, it is whole wheat flour. With this whole wheat flour, what can I make? *Whole wheat bread.*

Now, if before I ground these wheat berries up, I removed the bran, what would I have? *White flour.*
Knowing whether a food is a whole food or processed is important for healthy eating. How do you know your foods are whole?

*Write on flipchart. Be sure to include less packaging, less added ingredients, looks like what it would look like on a plant.*

When you are shopping you can ensure that you go for whole foods first by shopping around the outside of the supermarket before the inside aisles. If you think about a supermarket, what is on the outside? Produce, dairy, eggs, meat, fish, etc. The inside is where all the packaging is. This is not to say there are not healthy foods that come in packages, but how do you know if packaged foods are healthy or if a food has less added ingredients? *Food labels.*
Whole Foods Versus Processed Foods

Here are some examples of whole versus processed foods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Food</th>
<th>Processed Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>Apple PopTart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown rice</td>
<td>White rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat berries</td>
<td>Donut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Orange juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td>Canned tomato soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Tortilla chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato</td>
<td>Potato chip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some processing is not unhealthy. For instance, skim milk is processed from a less healthy whole version. Usually, the more processed the food, the worse it is for your health. So, the more you can stick to whole foods, the better.