



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

Office of Communication

1300 E Avenue □ Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8524 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 4-8524

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

[www.commissaries.com](http://www.commissaries.com)

---

**Release Number:** 52-10  
**Date:** May 24, 2010  
**Contact:** Karen Hawkins, DeCA dietitian  
**Tel.:** (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8404  
**E-mail:** [karen.hawkins@deca.mil](mailto:karen.hawkins@deca.mil)

## Children can develop good eating habits by reading nutrition labels

*By Karen Hawkins,  
DeCA dietitian*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Shopping for food and eating with your children provides great opportunities for them to learn what is really in food and how much of it to eat. You can make the experience fun by using “Spot the Block,” a creative U.S. Food and Drug Administration program that encourages parents to help their children establish good eating habits by reading the Nutrition Facts Label when making food choices.

With the current focus on making healthy choices, along with the growing issue of childhood obesity, it’s a good idea to start teaching children when they’re young. However, the Spot the Block program is designed specifically for “tweens,” children ages 9 to 13. A great way to get started with it is to challenge your child to spot the block on different items at the commissary. You and your child can also check out labels while putting away groceries. Have your child choose which food he or she thinks was the best purchase that day, and have him or her use the Nutrition Facts Label on the food package to explain why.

### Tips from Spot the Block

- **Look for Grams of Sugar.** Have your child check out the Nutrition Facts Label on different canned fruit products to find the one with the lowest amount of sugar.
- **Find Vegetables with the Highest Percentage of Vitamin A.** Send your child to the freezer section to Spot the Block on different frozen vegetable packages, including types

with and without sauce. Ask him or her to find the one with the lowest fat content and the highest amount of vitamin A. Remind your child that vitamin A is a valuable nutrient for good health.

- **Choose the cereal with the fewest grams of sugar.** Ask your child to find a cereal that is low in sugar and high in fiber. Have him or her compare that cereal to one you currently have at home. Remind your child to choose nutrients wisely.
- **Find the Frozen Pizza with the Lowest Total Fat.** Ask your child to Spot the Block on frozen pizzas to see which has the lowest fat and sodium – two nutrients to get less of. Choose the one that is highest in beneficial nutrients, such as calcium and iron.
- **Check Out the Nutrition Facts Label on Nuts and Dried Fruits.** Nuts and dried fruits can make great snacks, because they often contain much-needed nutrients. However, too many servings can add up to a lot of calories. Have your child check out the serving sizes for peanut butter, nuts and dried fruit. Remind him or her that serving size is important.
- **After Leaving the Store.** Turn the ride home and the unpacking of groceries into an educational adventure. Ask your child if he or she learned anything interesting while reading labels. Use the answers as a springboard for discussing how easy it is to use the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages.

Here are some nutrition-label tips from the campaign for tweens and others:

- Check out the serving size. Remember that one package isn't necessarily one serving!
- Use the serving size to discover the total number of calories and nutrients per package.
- Consider the calories. When looking at a food's calories, remember: 40 is low, 100 is moderate and 400 is high.
- Pay attention to the calories you eat throughout the day. The Nutrition Facts Label is based on a 2,000 calorie diet – but your calorie needs might be different. To find out what your “target” calories per day are, visit [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov) and use MyPyramid Menu Planner.
- Choose nutrients wisely. Choose foods that are lower in certain fats, cholesterol, sodium and sugars when making daily food choices.
- Nutrients to get less of, like trans fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium and sugars: 5 percent daily value is low.
- Nutrients to get more of, like potassium, fiber, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium: 20 percent daily value is high.

Also check out the interactive website at [www.spottheblock.com](http://www.spottheblock.com) that includes streaming video spots featuring Cartoon Network characters, an educational rap song and downloadable desktop wallpapers.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

### **-DeCA-**

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*