Introducing Every Body Eats

Our country is in the midst of a health crisis. According to the latest publication of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, between 1992 and 2002, 65 percent of U.S. adults were overweight, an increase from 56 percent since the previous decade. During the same period, almost a third of Americans were obese. Approximately 16 percent of children and adolescents aged 6 to 19 years were considered overweight. Being overweight or obese are major risk factors for some of the leading causes of death in this country, including heart disease and diabetes. Typical American diets and activity levels fall well short of guidelines and recommendations. Never have the topics of nutrition and fitness been so relevant or the need for schools, museums, and communities to work together to address these topics so critical.

Responding to this need, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry created Every Body Eats, an interactive, bilingual exhibit that explores nutrition science and teaches visitors how to make healthy food choices. The exhibit is part of a government-funded project to create four traveling exhibitions and accompanying educational materials focused on current research in nutrition and physical activity and its applications to personal and family wellness. The exhibits and programs are intended to:

• promote intergenerational learning about healthy nutrition and physical activity,
• promote understanding of how clinical research methods and outcomes provide us with this information, and
• encourage families to apply their understanding of healthy eating and physical activity by practicing decision making and helping them find ways to overcome common barriers to healthy choices.

Featuring the most up-to-date nutrition science, Every Body Eats targets children in kindergarten through fifth grade and their families and includes bilingual exhibit text and educational materials in Spanish and English. Visitors will see what ingredients are in various foods, learn how to read nutrition labels, scan items at a mini-supermarket, and find out what an appropriate serving size looks like. They will review clinical research and realize that healthy choices are within their reach. The information and activities in this Teachers’ Guide will help extend students' experiences from the museum to the classroom.

Learning Objectives
The majority of adults, and even many kids, know the difference between healthy and unhealthy choices. The Every Body Eats exhibit not only teaches visitors basic nutrition information but also allows them to practice healthy eating behaviors in real-world situations. The exhibit focuses on positive motivational health messages, such as short-term and long-term benefits. Activities will give visitors a better understanding of the nutrition science that underlies
recommendations for healthy eating and will empower them to make healthy choices for themselves.

The exhibit content is focused around a single "big idea":

- "The whole family benefits when we make informed healthy choices."

Several secondary messages support this big idea:

- "I can look to science, including results from clinical research, to get information to help me make healthy choices."
- "I can look to scientific research to help me decipher the messages about food and nutrition presented by the media and advertisers."
- "Healthy eating and physical fitness help to keep our bodies strong, give us the energy to do our favorite activities, and enable us to look and feel our best."
- "Healthy eating involves choosing whole foods and drinking water."
- "A healthy lifestyle requires a balance of calories in and calories out."

The Exhibit Descriptions section below has take-home messages for each exhibit component.