

Chapter 14

Eating Patterns

Conflicts in Making Food Choices

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

In *Food for Today*, you have read about the body's physical need for nutrients. You have also learned that food fulfills many psychological needs as well and that your food choices are influenced by many different factors. What happens when these additional needs, wants, and influences conflict with the physical need for good nutrition?

For example, as Chapter 2 tells you, people's food choices are determined in large part by their *available resources*. If the food grown in a particular area lacks one or more essential nutrients, the health of the people living there could be seriously affected.

Your available resources are not limited by what grows in your area. Often, however, your choices are limited by where you happen to be at a given time. For example, if you are attending a ball game, you are limited to the foods at the snack bar. Most or all of the foods offered may be high in sugar or fat, and most or all of the beverages full of sugar or caffeine.

The lack of available resources may be compounded by your *lifestyle*, another influence on food choices that sometimes causes conflicts. Like many people, you may have a busy schedule that doesn't cater to satisfying your nutritional needs. You may spend much of your time and consume much of your food away from home, further limiting your available resources.

Psychological needs, such as the need for a sense of belonging, can also conflict with the need for good nutrition. When people come together they eat, and the foods available at social events are rarely chosen with health in mind. Even if you are determined to make healthful food choices, it can be hard to say no when your friend offers you potato chips with sour cream dip or a favorite relative insists you try her homemade pecan pie.

It's important to understand that physical needs and other influences on food choices should not be used as excuses for poor nutrition. Instead, look for ways to resolve the conflicts and give your body the nutrients it needs.

It's up to you to identify healthful options and choose them whenever possible. For instance, most restaurants, even fast food restaurants, have nutritious salads. Some of the side dishes offered, such as beans or vegetables, may also make healthful food choices. Snack bars sometimes offer yogurt or fresh fruit. If you eat on the run, carry snacks such as fresh vegetables and fruits, whole-grain crackers, or rice cakes.

When you plan a party, you can provide some healthful food choices. Sliced fruits, vegetable plates with low-fat dips, rice cakes, and many bean dips make excellent party foods. Sandwiches made with whole-grain bread are also nutritious party pleasers. If you are attending a party given by someone else, you may wish to bring a healthful dish to contribute.

Any time you are suggesting a restaurant, hosting a dinner, or planning a party, you have the opportunity to make healthful food choices available to your friends.

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Thinking Critically

1. How can you encourage restaurants to offer healthful food choices?

2. What are some ways teens can work toward achieving a healthier lifestyle?

3. How do the media influence the restaurants or snack foods teens choose? Cite or use two examples.

For Further Study

- ◆ Use the RAFTS strategy to complete the following activity. (R=role; A=audience; F=format; T=topic; S=use strong verbs.)

As a food editor (role), with a weekly food column (format), you provide advice on many food-related topics.

- ◆ Recently, a teen (audience) wrote to you about her dilemma: she wants to make better food choices (topic), but her two best friends do not share her interest. Because they spend a lot of time together eating at fast-food restaurants or snacking at home or at school, what advice would you give this teen?
- ◆ Teens (audience) who work part-time after school usually go directly from school to work. Often this means they do not have time for dinner. What suggestions do you have to help teens make this transition from school to work while adequately meeting their nutritional needs (topic)?
- ◆ Conduct research on the following question: Do you think restaurants should take any responsibility for the nutritional needs of their customers?
 - ◆ Create a questionnaire with five questions that would provide information or data to help answer the question.
 - ◆ Survey fifteen teens and fifteen adults.
 - ◆ Create a spreadsheet of your data. Include a title (question), legend, and X and Y axis titles.
 - ◆ Summarize your findings.