

Healthy foods for my school

Schools provide an important opportunity for supporting and practising healthy eating. But with store shelves filled with so many food products, it's often a challenge to know what choices to make for your school. How can you make sure your students are offered healthy food choices?

The goal is to have healthy foods and beverages available more often and less healthy choices available less often.

WHAT SHOULD I CHOOSE?

These guidelines are for choosing healthy foods to support healthy eating at your school. They provide practical information on how to choose the most nutritious foods for students. Foods are listed as Choose Most and Choose Sometimes. Choose the majority of your items from the Choose Most list to provide the healthiest choices possible.

★ **“Choose Most” Foods**

- Generally lower in added fat, sugar, and salt or are a source of fibre.
- Sources of protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and/or minerals.
- Whole grains, vegetables and fruit, lower fat milk and alternatives, and leaner meats and alternatives.

◆ **“Choose Sometimes” Foods**

- Higher in fat, sugar or salt or lower in fibre, generally as a result of food processing.
- Sources of protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and/or minerals.

This resource focuses on Choose Most and Choose Sometimes foods: the best food choices. Many foods do not fit into either of these categories.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Food Preparation

These guidelines are to help you select nutritious foods, but how the food is prepared also affects the nutritional value. (e.g. adding fat when deep frying or adding sugar to fruit). “Homemade” foods can be great choices and provide the opportunity to reduce fat, sugar and salt and increase the fibre in recipes.

Variety

No one food provides all of the nutrients for good health, so choose a variety of foods for your school.

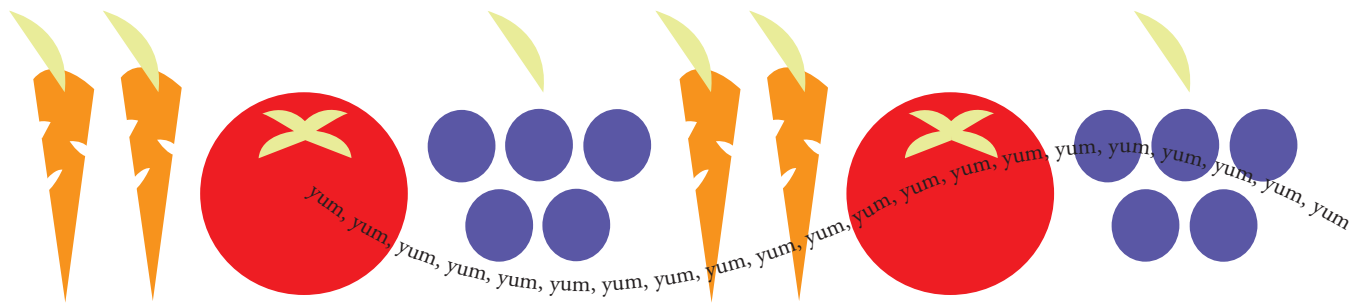
Allergies

If you have a student with a life-threatening food allergy, check with your school for guidelines or policies regarding food allergies. The guidelines in this resource are for students in general rather than those who must follow a clinical diet.

Portion Size

The Nutrition Facts panel on food labels include the portion size as given by the manufacturer. Serving sizes, according to Canada's Food Guide and included in this resource, can be different from the manufacturer's portion size. Compare the portion size on the package to the amount you actually serve. Don't assume one package is one serving according to Canada's Food Guide.





TIPS FOR MAKING THE BEST CHOICES

- If you have a choice between different brands of the same product, choose the product that is lower in fat, sugar or salt or higher in fibre.
- “% Daily Value” tells you if there is a little or a lot of a particular nutrient in the given portion size. It can be used to compare food products. The daily values are not specific to the nutrient requirements of children.
- Limit foods with trans fats.
- All foods recommended meet or exceed the standards set for the **◆ Choose Sometimes** category.

Step 1: Check the Nutrition Facts Table

The Nutrition Facts table on a package gives you information on 13 nutrients as well as calories for the serving size shown at the top of the label.

To make your choices easier, a Nutrition Facts table is shown for each of the four food groups as well as for prepared mixed dishes. The key information for each food group is highlighted. These are guidelines for choosing foods from the **★ Choose Most** and **◆ Choose Sometimes** groups. Consider these as minimum amounts and aim to choose better than listed.

Standards:

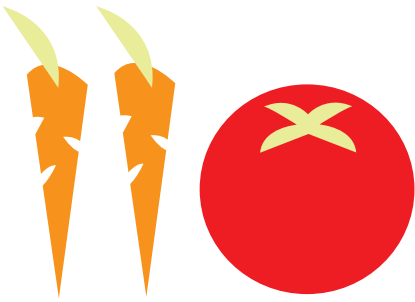
| Nutrition Facts for Grain Products | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Per | Specific amount listed on label |
| Calories | |
| Fat | 10 g or less (15% Daily Value) ← |
| Saturates | 2 g or less |
| + Trans | 0 g |
| Cholesterol | |
| Sodium | 480 mg or less (20% Daily Value) ← |
| Carbohydrate | |
| Fibre | 2 g or greater ← |
| Sugars | 12 g or less |
| Protein | |
| Vitamin A | |
| Vitamin C | |
| Calcium | |
| Iron | |

Example:

- For grain products, choose a product with:
- 10 grams or less of total fat, including 2g or less saturated fat and 0 grams of trans fat
 - Less than 480 mg of sodium (no more than 20% of DV, or daily value).
 - 2 grams or greater of fibre
 - 12 grams or less of sugar

Step 2: Check the Ingredient List

The ingredient list tells you what ingredients are in the package. In general, the first three ingredients listed make up most of what is in the product. For example, a product with an ingredient list beginning “sugar, maltodextrin, hydrogenated vegetable oil, modified milk, cocoa” etc. is not a rich source of milk.



VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

TIPS FOR MAKING THE BEST CHOICES

- Vegetables or fruit should be listed as the first ingredient (or second, if water is first).
- Choose dark green or dark orange vegetables.
- Eating the whole fruit is a better choice than drinking juice; juice has less fibre.
- Vegetable or fruit bars, fruit leathers and dried fruits are better if eaten with a meal because they have concentrated natural sugars that can stick to teeth.
- Ketchup, mustard, relish and pickles are condiments, not vegetables. Limit to 1-2 teaspoons per serving.

Check the Nutrition Facts table. Consider the nutrition facts below as minimum standards. Aim to make the best choices available. Pay particular attention to the nutrients marked with an arrow.

Standards:

| Nutrition Facts for Vegetables and Fruit | |
|--|---|
| Per <i>Specific amount listed on label</i> | |
| Calories | |
| Fat | 5 g or less (8% Daily Value) |
| Saturates | 2 g or less |
| + Trans | 0 g |
| Cholesterol | |
| Sodium | 480 mg or less (20% Daily Value) |
| Carbohydrate | |
| Fibre | |
| Sugars | *see below |
| Protein | |
| Vitamin A | |
| Vitamin C | |
| Calcium | |
| Iron | |

*Do not choose foods where sugar is the first ingredient in the ingredient list. Sugars can be from many forms: honey, molasses, corn syrup and words ending in "ose" (e.g. sucrose, fructose, maltose, dextrose, lactose, galactose).

★ Choose Most:

- Fresh vegetables and fruit
- Baked, boiled or mashed potatoes
- "Homemade" vegetable soup
- Salad: tossed or coleslaw with low fat dressing
- Fruit salad
- Stir-fry
- Unsweetened applesauce/fruit blends
- Frozen vegetables and fruit without added sugar, fats or sauces

◆ Choose Sometimes:

- Canned vegetables and fruits
- 100% vegetable and fruit juices
- Canned vegetable soups with less than 480 mg sodium
- Dried fruit
- Fruit and vegetables bars and leathers – check the label for vegetable or fruit as the first ingredient

Compare listed serving size to Canada's Food Guide serving sizes which are:

- 125 mL (1/2 cup) fresh frozen or canned vegetables or fruits
- 1 fruit
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) juice
- 250 mL (1 cup) raw leafy vegetables



GRAIN PRODUCTS

Tips For Making The Best Choices

- Whole grain, enriched wheat flour or rice should be listed as the first ingredient (or second, if water is first).
- Choose whole grains that are a good (4g) or excellent (6g) source of fibre.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain.
- Choose products with less than 12g sugar or that don't list sugar as the first or second ingredient.

Check the Nutrition Facts table.

Consider the nutrition facts below as minimum standards. Aim to make the best choices available. Pay particular attention to the nutrients marked with an arrow.

Standards:

| Nutrition Facts for Grain Products | |
|--|---|
| Per <i>Specific amount listed on label</i> | |
| Calories | |
| Fat | 10 g or less (15% Daily Value) ← |
| Saturates | 2 g or less |
| + Trans | 0 g |
| Cholesterol | |
| Sodium | 480 mg or less (20% Daily Value) ← |
| Carbohydrate | |
| Fibre | 2 g or greater ← |
| Sugars | 12 g or less |
| Protein | |
| Vitamin A | |
| Vitamin C | |
| Calcium | |
| Iron | |

★ Choose Most

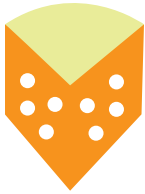
- Whole grain, whole wheat, or multi-grain buns, bread, bagels, pitas, English muffins or tortillas
- Baked bannock
- Cold/hot cereal with greater than 2 g fibre, and a sugar is not the first ingredient
- Wild rice, brown rice
- Whole wheat pasta, noodles
- Barley
- Whole wheat couscous

◆ Choose Sometimes

- Enriched (white) buns, bagels, pitas, English muffins, tortillas, bannock
- Cold/hot cereal made with whole grain or enriched flour or rice, and 12 g or less sugar
- Long grain rice, rice cakes
- Enriched (white) pasta
- Crackers made with whole grain or enriched flour or rice, and less than 480 mg sodium
- Granola/cereal bars, not dipped, and less than 12 g sugar
- Baked goods with less than 10 g fat, less than 12 g sugar
- Muffins
- Pancakes/waffles

Compare listed serving size to Canada's Food Guide serving sizes which are:

- 1 slice bread
- ½ bagel or tortilla or pita
- 30 g cold cereal
- 175 mL (¾ cup) hot cereal
- 125 mL (½ cup) cooked pasta or rice or bulgur



MILK AND ALTERNATIVES

Tips For Making The Best Choices

- In milk products, milk must be listed as the first ingredient. Cream is not considered a milk ingredient.
- In milk alternatives, water may be the first ingredient followed by a milk alternative such as soy.
- Whole milk is recommended for children under two years of age.
- When choosing between similar products, choose the one that provides greater than 10% DV (daily value) of vitamin D.
- Remember that sugar and sweeteners increase the preference for sweet foods.

Check the Nutrition Facts table. Consider the nutrition facts below as minimum standards. Aim to make the best choices available. Pay particular attention to the nutrients marked with an arrow.

Standards:

| Nutrition Facts for Milk and Alternatives | |
|--|---|
| Per <i>Specific amount listed on label</i> | |
| Calories | |
| Fat | 10 g or less (15% Daily Value) ← |
| Saturates | |
| + Trans | 0.5 g or less |
| Cholesterol | |
| Sodium | |
| Carbohydrate | |
| Fibre | |
| Sugars | 25 g or less |
| Protein | |
| Vitamin A | |
| Vitamin C | |
| Calcium | 10% Daily Value or greater ← |
| Iron | |

★ Choose Most

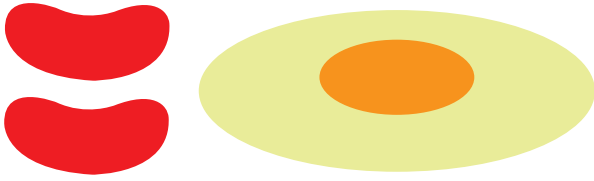
- Skim, 1% or 2% milk
- Fortified soy beverages
- Buttermilk
- Cheese or cheese strings with less than 20% M.F. (milk fat)
- Yogurt (plain, unsweetened)

◆ Choose Sometimes

- Whole milk
- Flavoured milks, smoothies
- Hot chocolate made with milk
- Cheese with 20% M.F. (milk fat) or greater
- Processed cheese slices
- Cheese spread
- Flavoured yogurt
- Milk puddings, custard
- Frozen yogurt
- Ice milk

Compare listed serving size to Canada's Food Guide serving sizes which are:

- 250 mL (1 cup) milk or reconstituted powdered milk
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) evaporated milk
- 250 mL (1 cup) soy milk
- 175 mL (3/4 cup) yogurt or kefir
- 50 g (1 1/2 oz) cheese



MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES

Tips For Making The Best Choices

- Choose meat and alternatives without added fat, sugar and salt.
- Meat or alternatives must be listed as the first ingredient.

Check the Nutrition Facts table. Consider the nutrition facts below as minimum standards. Aim to make the best choices available. Pay particular attention to the nutrients marked with an arrow.

Standards:

| Nutrition Facts for Meat and Alternatives* | |
|--|---|
| Per <i>Specific amount listed on label</i> | |
| Calories | |
| Fat | 15 g or less (23% Daily Value) ← |
| Saturates | 5 g or less |
| + Trans | 0.5 g or less |
| Cholesterol | |
| Sodium | 480 mg or less (20% Daily Value) |
| Carbohydrate | |
| Fibre | |
| Sugars | |
| Protein | 5 g or greater ← |
| Vitamin A | |
| Vitamin C | |
| Calcium | |
| Iron | |

* This table does not apply to nuts, seeds and nut butters. Look for nuts, seeds and nut butters in which a sugar is not the first ingredient.

★ Choose Most

- Fresh or frozen, lean chicken, turkey, beef, pork, lamb that is grilled or roasted
- Fish and seafood fresh or frozen, not battered or fried
- Lean or extra lean ground meat
- Wild meat
- Canned tuna, salmon, chicken, ham, crab
- Dried peas, beans, lentils
- All nuts and seeds without added salt or sugar
- Nut butters
- Eggs
- Soy meats

◆ Choose Sometimes

- Lean deli meats (turkey, chicken, ham, corned beef, pastrami)
- Lean preformed hamburger patties
- Breaded fish or fillets with less than 15 g fat
- Nuts and seeds that are salted, sweetened
- Processed meats
- Canned beans with less than 480 mg sodium

Compare listed serving size to Canada's Food Guide serving sizes which are:

- 75 g (2 ½ oz) / 125 mL (1/2 cup) cooked meat, fish, poultry, shellfish
- 175 mL (3/4 cup) legumes
- 175 mL (3/4 cup) tofu
- 2 eggs
- 30 mL (2 tablespoons) peanut butter
- 60 mL (1/4 cup) shelled nuts or seeds



PREPARED MIXED DISHES

Store-bought mixed dishes vary greatly in food content. Compare the ingredients in the mixed dish to the food groups and make the best choices based on the criteria below.

A prepared mixed dish product must contain at least **two food groups**. Preference should be given to food items with a **vegetable listed in the first three ingredients**. Most recommended products should have a meat, milk or alternative to provide protein.

Tips For Making The Best Choices

- Choose products that are lower in fat and salt and higher in fibre.
- Choose items that have been prepared using a lower fat cooking method such as baking, broiling, roasting, barbequing or boiling.
- All foods served should have less than or equal to 0.5 g of trans fat.
- Some “homemade” mixed dishes will meet the criteria for their major ingredients rather than for prepared mixed dishes. For example, a serving of homemade stew rich in vegetables and meat will meet the criteria for both vegetables and meat and alternatives. “Homemade” choices allow you to reduce fat, sugar and salt and to increase fibre.

Standards:

Select foods that have

- Trans fat: 0.5 g or less and **four** of the following
- Fat: 3 g (5% Daily Value) or less
- Saturates: 2 g or less
- Sodium: 960 mg (40% Daily Value) or less
- Fibre: 2 g or greater
- Sugars: See note below nutrition fact table*
- At least one of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium or iron: 5% or greater

Check the Nutrition Facts table.

Consider the nutrition facts below as minimum standards. Aim to make the best choices available. Pay particular attention to the nutrients marked with an arrow below.

| Nutrition Facts for Prepared Mixed Dishes | |
|--|---|
| Per <i>Specific amount listed on label</i> | |
| Calories | |
| Fat | 3 g or less (5% Daily Value) ← |
| Saturates | 2 g or less |
| + Trans | 0.5 g or less |
| Cholesterol | |
| Sodium | 960 mg or less (40% Daily Value) ← |
| Carbohydrate | |
| Fibre | 2 g or greater ← |
| Sugars | *see below |
| Protein | |
| Vitamin A | 5% or greater |
| Vitamin C | 5% or greater |
| Calcium | 5% or greater |
| Iron | 5% or greater |

*Sugar should not be the first or second ingredient. Sugars can be from many forms: honey, molasses, corn syrup and words ending in “ose” (e.g. sucrose, fructose, maltose, dextrose, lactose, galactose).

★ Choose

- Canned soups/stews with less than 960 mg sodium
- Chunky soups/bean soups with less than 3 g fat and 960 mg sodium
- Pasta dishes with less than 3 g fat
- Pizza, calzones, fajitas with less than 3 g fat
- Casseroles containing vegetables
- Stir-fry
- Pasta and pasta salad with vegetables
- Subs, wraps, pitas
- Sloppy Joes
- Soft tacos
- Baked potatoes with low fat toppings
- Smoothies made with milk and fruit
- Quesadillas with less than 3 g fat
- Snack kits (tuna/crackers, pizza)
- Trail mix with nuts and fruit

Compare the serving size listed to the food groups in Canada’s Food Guide. After reading the ingredient list, you may have to speculate as to how much of each food group is in the product until you purchase it to check. For example, 10 mL (2 teaspoons) of vegetable in a serving of pasta does not count as a serving of vegetables and fruit.

For more information: Contact your public health nutritionist
03/08 3m

