
Appendix A
Healthier Eating and Nutrition in School
Food Categories¹

The following table is meant to serve as a general guide and is not exhaustive in its categorization of foods. Foods are categorized according to the definitions provided in section 3.0 of [Policy 711](#) and the criteria provided below. These additional criteria serve as nutrition label “look for’s” when determining if and how often specific foods and beverages may be served in schools.

Also, remember that food preparation plays a role in the categories found below. For example, lean or extra lean ground beef is placed in the maximum nutritional value category. However, if it is served as a hamburger with a processed cheese slice and mayonnaise, fat and sodium are added and therefore, the nutritional value changes. When serving *combination foods or mixed dishes*, consider in which categories the main ingredients belong. Desirable combination foods contain at least 1 food from the maximum nutritional value category and at least 1 additional item from either the maximum or moderate nutritional value categories.

Here are a few tips to facilitate the use of these categories:

1. Opt for foods that have been minimally processed. Check the Nutrition Facts table on packaged foods/beverages to determine whether or not the food/beverage meets the specified nutrition criteria.
2. Allergies should always be kept in mind when serving food in public schools.
3. Sauces/spreads (such as ketchup, mayonnaise, sour cream, etc.) used to complement foods should be low in fat and used in teaspoon (5 mL) or tablespoon (15 mL) servings. Low fat gravy may be served with foods in the maximum category.
4. When looking for sugar or sweeteners on an ingredient list, this would include honey, corn syrup, sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, or ingredients ending with “ose” such as glucose, fructose, dextrose, etc. Artificial sweeteners should be avoided except where otherwise indicated in this document.
5. Homemade is defined as foods made from ingredients from the maximum and moderate food categories rather than commercially prepared.
6. Whenever possible, trans fat free products (less than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving) should be served.
7. Consider appropriate serving sizes when offering food/beverages to students

Note: Current sodium criteria has been determined based partially on the limited availability of lower sodium products. The criteria is a maximum allowable amount however, whenever possible, lower amounts are recommended and may be required at a later date as product availability increases.

¹ Developed in partnership with the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport.

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
	<p><i>As per Policy 711, these foods are a good or excellent source of important nutrients and are low in fat, sugar and salt. These foods are considered nutrient dense relative to the energy they provide. These foods should be offered on a daily basis and comprise the majority of foods/beverages served in schools.</i></p>	<p><i>As per Policy 711, these foods are a source of nutrients but may be high in fat, sugar or salt. Relative to the energy they provide, these foods are not as nutrient dense as foods in the maximum nutritional value category. These foods can each be served up to a maximum of twice per week.</i></p>	<p><i>As per Policy 711, these foods provide few nutrients and are generally high in fat, sugar and/or salt. These foods are considered to have low nutrient density relative to the energy they provide. These foods should not be served in schools. (Note: For special occasions, schools may serve these foods however every effort should be made to also include foods with maximum or moderate nutritional value as per section 7.4 of Policy 711)</i></p>
<p>Vegetables Per ½ cup (125 mL) serving (for French fries use 85 gram serving)</p>	<p>Preparation method – raw, steamed, baked, boiled, roasted or stir fried Fat – None added (with exception of a small amount of unsaturated fat such as canola or olive oil in stir fry recipes) Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 0 grams Sodium – 240 mg or less Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh vegetables ▪ Frozen vegetables ▪ Vegetable stir-fries ▪ Salads made with fresh vegetables (refer to note on page 1 about combination foods) ▪ Canned vegetables meeting criteria </p>	<p>Preparation method – oven baked and those included in maximum category Fat – 5 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 480 mg or less Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some canned vegetables ▪ Frozen, trans fat free, oven baked French fries meeting criteria * ▪ Salsa meeting criteria <p>* If served, french fries must be limited to an 85 gram serving and should be served as part of a meal, not alone.</p> </p>	<p>Preparation method – deep fried, pan fried Fat – more than 5 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams Sodium – more than 480 mg Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poutine ▪ Deep fried french fries, many oven baked french fries ▪ Onion rings ▪ Commercially breaded / battered vegetables </p>

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
Fruit	<p>Sugar / Sweeteners – none added</p> <p>Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 0 grams</p> <p>Fibre – 1 gram or more</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh or frozen fruits ▪ Fruit canned in fruit juice ▪ Fruit compote, without sugar ▪ Salads made with fresh fruit (refer to note about combination foods, above) ▪ Dried fruit (no added sugar or fat)* ▪ 100% fruit leathers or bars- no sugar added* <p><i>* These foods are sticky and therefore are not the best choices to promote good dental health</i></p>	<p>Sugar / Sweeteners – some added but not the 1st ingredient</p> <p>Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 0 grams</p> <p>Fibre – 1 gram or more</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh or frozen fruit with some sugar added ▪ Fruit canned in light syrup ▪ Fruit compote with sugar added 	<p>Sugar / Sweeteners – added</p> <p>Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – may contain</p> <p>Fibre – less than 1 gram</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commercial fruit cups in gelatin ▪ Fruit canned in heavy syrup ▪ Processed fruit snacks (fruit leather with added sugar, gummies, etc.)
<p>Fruit and vegetable juice</p> <p><i>Serving size should be less than 250 mL for all ages. May choose up to 340 mL when 250 mL is not available.</i></p>	<p>Ingredients – 100% real juice</p> <p>Sugar / Sweeteners – none added</p> <p>Serving size – 250 mL or less</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frozen, 100% fruit juice bars ▪ 100% unsweetened pure fruit juice (orange, apple, pineapple, grape, etc.) ▪ Tomato/vegetable juice* <p><i>*Regular varieties are high in sodium; therefore low sodium varieties should be chosen.</i></p>	<p>Ingredients – 98% or more real fruit juice</p> <p>Sugar / Sweeteners – none added</p> <p>Serving size – 251 mL to 340 mL</p>	<p>Ingredients – less than 98% real fruit juice</p> <p>Sugar / Sweeteners – added</p> <p>Serving size – more than 340 mL</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fruit drinks, cocktails, punches and other fruit beverages ▪ Frozen fruit juice bars with less than 100% juice ▪ Any juice greater than 340 mL

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
Grain Products	<p>When choosing grain products including breads, rolls, bagels, pita, pancakes, English muffins, tortillas, crackers, cereal, pasta and rice, whole grain products are the healthiest choice.</p> <p>Every effort should be made to incorporate whole grain products into foods served in schools. When whole grain is not available, choose products made with enriched white flour, even though these foods are lower in fibre.</p>		
Cereal <i>Per 30 gram serving</i>	<p>Fibre – 3 grams or more Sugar – 6 grams or less</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whole grain cereals (hot or cold) meeting criteria. ▪ Oat cereal meeting criteria 	<p>Fibre – If 3 grams or more, may contain up to 15 grams of sugar or Fibre – If less than 3 grams, may contain a maximum of 6 grams of sugar.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-sweetened cereals (hot or cold) meeting criteria ▪ Rice or corn cereals meeting criteria 	<p>Fibre – 3 grams or more and more than 15 grams of sugar. or Fibre – less than 3 grams and more than 6 grams of sugar.</p>
Bread, rolls, bagels, flat bread, English muffins, etc <i>Per serving identified below:</i> <i>Bread- 1 slice (35 grams)</i> <i>Bagel- ½ (45 grams)</i> <i>Flat bread- ½ pita or ½ tortilla (35 grams)</i>	<p>Fat – 3 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less</p> <p>Serve whole grain products with a higher fibre content whenever possible.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% whole wheat bread ▪ Multigrain bagels 	<p>Fat – 5 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less</p> <p>Serve whole grain products with a higher fibre content whenever possible.</p>	<p>Fat – more than 5 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Croissants

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
Pasta and Rice <i>Per ½ cup (125 mL) serving, prepared</i>	Fat – 3 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 240 mg or less <i>Examples:</i> ▪ Whole wheat pasta ▪ Brown rice	Fat – 5 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 480 mg or less	Fat – more than 5 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams Sodium – more than 480 mg <i>Examples:</i> ▪ Pre-seasoned, deep-fried, canned pastas or rice
Soups* <i>Per 1 cup (250 mL) serving</i> * Includes all types of soup: homemade, canned, pasta, vegetable, cream, etc.	Fat – 3 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 480 mg or less Soup base in homemade soups – Maximum of: • 1 tsp / cup water (5 mL / 250 mL) • 4 tsp / quart water (20 mL / L)	Fat – 5 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 960 mg or less Soup base in homemade soups – Maximum of: • 2 tsp / cup water (10 mL / 250 mL) • 8 tsp / quart water (40 mL / L) <i>Examples:</i> ▪ Low sodium soups meeting criteria	Fat – more than 5 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams Sodium – more than 960 mg Soup base in homemade soups – More than: • 2 tsp / cup water (10 mL / 250 mL) • 8 tsp / quart water (40 mL / L)
Crackers <i>Per serving identified on the label (usually about 20 grams)</i>	Fat – 3 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 240 mg or less Fibre – 1 gram or more	Fat – 5 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Sodium – 480 mg or less Fibre – 1 gram or more	Fat – more than 5 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams Sodium – more than 480 mg Fibre – less than 1 gram
Granola, Cereal bars, Cookies and other baked goods <i>Per serving identified on the label</i>	No foods in this category are considered maximum nutritional value.	Sugar – 10 grams or less and can not be the 1 st ingredient. <i>and</i> <i>Must meet at least 2 of the 3 criteria below:</i> Fat – 5 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 2 grams or less Fibre – 2 grams or more <i>Examples:</i> ▪ Loaf breads meeting criteria (banana, zucchini, pumpkin, etc.) ▪ Homemade fruit crisps (apple, rhubarb, etc.)	Sugar – more than 10 grams Fat – more than 5 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams Fibre – less than 2 grams <i>Examples:</i> ▪ Pastries, pies and cakes ▪ High fat muffins ▪ Doughnuts

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
Milk and alternatives <i>Per 1 cup (250 mL) serving</i>	Fat – 2% Milk Fat (MF) or less Sugar – less than 28 grams <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>White or flavoured milk</i> ² ▪ <i>Fortified soy beverages</i>	Fat – more than 2% MF Sugar – 28 to 35 grams <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Homemade milkshakes</i>	Fat – more than 2% MF Sugar – more than 35 grams <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Commercial milkshakes</i>
Yogurt and other similar items <i>Per serving identified on the label (usually 100-175 grams)</i>	Fat – 2% MF or less Sugar – less than 15 grams Ingredients – Milk ingredient (excluding cream) is 1 st ingredient <i>If sweetened, natural sweeteners (e.g. sugar, honey, etc.) are preferred, however, may contain artificial sweeteners.</i> <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Yogurt meeting criteria</i>	Fat – More than 2% MF Sugar – 15 to 35 grams Ingredients – Milk ingredient (excluding cream) is 1 st ingredient <i>If sweetened, natural sweeteners (e.g. sugar, honey, etc.) are preferred, however, may contain artificial sweeteners.</i> <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Yogurt drinks</i> ▪ <i>Homemade yogurt dips for fruit and vegetables.</i> ▪ <i>Fresh cheese products</i>	Fat – More than 2% MF Sugar – more than 35 grams
Frozen milk desserts <i>Per serving identified on the label</i>	No foods in this food category are considered maximum nutritional value.	Fat – 3 grams or less Calcium – 5% or more Daily Value (DV) Ingredients – Milk (or soy if applicable) is first ingredient. <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Frozen yogurt, low fat ice cream and ice milk meeting criteria</i>	Fat – more than 3 grams Calcium – Less than 5% DV <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Ice cream</i>
Cheese <i>Per 1 ounce (30 g) serving, or per serving identified on the label</i>	Fat – 20% or less MF Sodium – 480 mg or less Calcium – 15% or more DV Ingredients – Milk is 1 st ingredient <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Hard cheeses meeting criteria</i>	Fat – 21%- 32% MF Sodium – 960 mg or less Calcium – 10% or more DV Ingredients – Milk is 1 st ingredient <i>Examples:</i> ▪ <i>Hard cheeses meeting criteria</i> ▪ <i>Cottage cheese (2% MF or less)</i> ▪ <i>Cheese slices meeting criteria</i>	Fat – more than 32% MF Sodium – more than 960 mg Calcium – less than 10% DV
Puddings (commercial, ready to eat) <i>Per serving as packaged</i>	Fat – 3 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 1 gram or less Sugar – less than 15 grams Calcium – 15% or more DV	Fat – 3 grams or less Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – 1 gram or less Sugar – 15 to 35 grams Calcium – 10% or more DV	Fat – more than 3 grams Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 1 gram Sugar – more than 35 grams Calcium – less than 10% DV

² It should be noted that the nutritional value (protein, calcium, vitamin A, and D, etc) of flavoured milk is the same for both white milk and most flavoured milks. However, there is significantly more sugar in flavoured milks and therefore, they contain more calories. In addition, the caffeine contained in chocolate milk (5-7 mg per 250 mL) may be of concern and should be taken into account when serving chocolate milk.

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
Packaged pudding powder (prepared) Per ½ cup (125 mL) serving	Preparation method – use milk with 2% MF or less Fat – 3 grams or less Sugar – 15 grams or less Calcium – 15% or more DV	Preparation method – use milk with 2% MF or less Fat – 3 grams or less Sugar – 35 grams or less Calcium – 10% or more DV	Fat – more than 3 grams Sugar – more than 35 grams Calcium – less than 10% DV
Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
Meat and alternatives Per 2.5 oz (75g) serving, cooked	Preparation method – Baked, broiled, grilled, stir fried, stewed, roasted Unprocessed, fresh or frozen Ingredients – meat is first ingredient Fat – 5 grams or less Ground meat must contain 17% fat or less. Sodium – 240 mg or less Protein – 10 grams or more <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chicken and turkey ▪ Lean or extra lean beef or pork ▪ Lean or extra lean ground meat ▪ Fish or seafood ▪ Canned fish in water ▪ Legumes (beans, peas, lentils) ▪ Eggs or egg substitute ▪ Tofu and soy products ▪ Peanut butter and unsalted, unsweetened nuts and seeds not roasted in oil (where allergies permit) 	Preparation method – Baked, broiled, grilled, stir fried, stewed or roasted Fat – 10 grams or less Ground meat containing 18 to 23% fat. Sodium – 960 mg or less Protein – 8 grams or more. <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meat, chicken, turkey or fish (not fried or previously fried) ▪ Medium ground meat ▪ Baked ham ▪ Salted and unsweetened nuts and seeds (where allergies permit) 	Preparation method – Deep fried Fat – More than 10 grams. Ground meat containing more than 23% fat Sodium – More than 960 mg Protein – Less than 8 grams <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular ground meat
Processed meats Per 1 oz (30 g) serving	Fat – 2 grams or less Sodium – 320 mg or less <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lean cold cuts (roast beef, ham, chicken or turkey) meeting criteria 	Fat – 10 grams or less Sodium – 960 mg or less <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lean cold cuts (roast beef, ham, chicken or turkey) meeting criteria 	Fat – more than 10 grams Sodium – more than 960 mg <i>In addition to fat and sodium, nitrates and other additives are considered when determining the nutritional value of these foods.</i> <i>Examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Processed meats (pepperoni, salami, bologna, sausage, etc.) ▪ Fried or previously fried, battered or breaded meat, fish, chicken or turkey ▪ Hot dogs ▪ Bacon

Food Category	Maximum Nutritional Value (Daily)	Moderate Nutritional Value (2 times per week)	Minimum Nutritional Value (not allowed)
<p>Snack type items and other foods not categorized above.</p> <p><i>Per vended package or per serving identified on the label</i></p>	<p>No foods in this category are considered maximum nutritional value.</p>	<p>Fat – less than 30% calories from fat (see calculation below)</p> <p>Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) less than 2 grams</p> <p>Sodium – less than 300 mg</p> <p>Sugar – Not listed as 1st ingredient</p> <p><u>Calculation:</u> To determine % calories from fat:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Multiply total grams of fat on the product's Nutrition Facts table by 9 Divide by the total number of calories Multiply by 100 <p><i>Example: 30 grams of rice chips has 1.5 grams of fat and 125 calories:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> $1.5 \text{ g of fat} \times 9 = 13.5$ $13.5 / 125 \text{ calories} = 0.108$ $0.108 \times 100 = 10.8\% \text{ calories from fat.}$ (Therefore, fits in moderate category) 	<p>Fat – more than 30% calories from fat (see calculation)</p> <p>Saturated & Trans Fat (combined) – more than 2 grams</p> <p>Sodium – 300 mg or more</p> <p>Sugar or artificial sweeteners – first ingredient</p> <p>None or negligible amount of essential nutrients</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Candy ▪ Breath mints ▪ Gum ▪ Chips ▪ Soft drinks (carbonated soda) ▪ Sweetened beverages (commercially prepared iced teas, lemonades, sports drinks, artificially sweetened waters, etc.) ▪ High sugar syrups and toppings ▪ Deep fried products of any kind ▪ Chocolate (bars or candy) ▪ Tea, coffee, decaffeinated coffee

The following food options can be considered for vending machines and canteens. Specific food items must meet the criteria for maximum or moderate nutritional value for that particular food category. This list is not exhaustive and each item should be evaluated based on fat, sugar and sodium content. If you have questions or require further information, please contact your local Public Health Nutritionist.

OPTIONS FOR SCHOOL CANTEENS AND VENDING MACHINES³

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% fruit juice • 100% fruit snacks/leathers/bars or fruit and veggie bars • Baked rice chips • Baked tortilla chips • Bottled water • Canned fruit, in 100% fruit juice • Cereal bars • Cereal • Cereal snack mix • Cheese strings / portions • Crackers • Granola/trail mix bars • Date, raspberry or fig cookies • Dried fruit • Fresh fruit • Fruit bowls • Fruit sauces – unsweetened (tube or container) • 100 % pure juice boxes (not fruit drinks, beverages or punches) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low fat, whole grain muffins • Milk – 2% MF or less, white or flavoured • Nuts and seeds (peanuts, sunflowers, pumpkin seeds, almonds, cashews, etc.) (<i>where allergies permit</i>) • Pita puffs / pita minis • Popcorn • Homemade pudding • Raisins • Raw vegetables and dip • Rice cakes • Rice crispy squares • Salsa portion cups • Sliced apples • Soy beverage • Trail mix – a combination of dried cereal (see healthy cereals criteria above), dried fruit, nuts and seeds) • Vegetable juice • Whole grain bread, bagels, muffins and rolls • Yogurt – tubs, tubes or yogurt drink
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³ Source: Adapted from *Options for School Canteens and Vending*, Department of Health and Wellness, March 2005