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PAMPHLET

HEALTHY SCHOOL MENUS

What young people eat is a responsibility that is shared primarily by parents, schools and the youth themselves. The purpose of establishing a reference framework for schools is not to take this responsibility away from parents, but rather to ensure that schools provide an environment that is conducive to healthy living habits, such as healthy eating. This pamphlet is intended as a tool for food service providers and catering as well as cafeteria service personnel to optimize the quality and variety of foods offered in schools. It also provides school boards and private schools with a nutritional framework to prepare calls for tender.



A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Even though students do not eat all of their meals at school, schools are nonetheless responsible for providing a variety of nutritious foods at affordable prices. To do so, it is suggested that menus be approved by a nutritionist.

> In order to offer varied and balanced meals, it is important to take into account several elements:

- Plan cyclical menus based on a minimum four-week rotating cycle.
- Offer meals from the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives* as well as **Meat and Alternatives**.
- Offer a weekly selection of meat and alternatives.
- Offer, at least once a week, a meal that includes unfried, unbreaded fish (e.g. haddock, cod, salmon, sole, tuna, tilapia, trout, turbot) to increase variety and provide healthy essential fats.
- Prepare a main course including a side portion of at least one vegetable.
- Provide a variety of grain products (e.g. rice, bread, pasta, couscous, bulgur, quinoa, millet), preferably whole grain.
- Provide milk with every meal.
- Make sure that quantities and serving sizes are age appropriate. The table below indicates the daily recommended portion for young students.

Age	Children		Adolescents	
	4-8	9-13	14-18	
Gender	Girls & Boys		Girls	Boys
Vegetables & Fruit	5	6	7	8
Grain Products	4	6	6	7
Milk & Alternatives	2	3-4	3-4	3-4
Meat & Alternatives	1	1-2	2	3

For more information, consult *Canada's Food Guide* at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/order-commander/index_e.html.

> Offer a choice of desserts and snacks made with fruit, milk products and whole grain products:

- Offer at least one milk-based dessert per meal (e.g. pudding, flan, yogurt, tapioca).
- Offer at least one fruit-based dessert per meal (e.g. fruit salad in juice or light syrup, fresh fruit, unsweetened fruit purée, fruit crumble, date squares).

- Avoid high-fat, high-sugar desserts and snacks (e.g. pastries, cakes, pies, donuts, ice cream, chocolate bars with less than 70% cocoa) and replace them with homemade muffins or cookies, homemade banana bread or carrot cake, cereal bars, etc.

> Opt for low- or reduced-salt versions of certain foods (e.g. vegetable and tomato juice, crackers, soy sauce). Use salt substitutes (e.g. *Mrs. Dash, NoSalt*), herbs, spices, lemon juice, onion or garlic powder instead of celery, garlic or onion salt, monosodium glutamate, etc.

> Encourage young people to try new foods and dishes, and develop their taste buds by organizing theme lunches, for example.

> Pay special attention to the recipes used, so that meals are healthy and tasty and have an interesting texture. Use seasonings (e.g. herbs, spices, lemon juice, onion or garlic powder) to enhance the flavour of foods.

> Create food combinations that are varied, colourful, attractive and appetizing.

> Describe menu items in original ways to stimulate the students' curiosity.

> Post menus in conspicuous places throughout the school.

> When purchasing food products, consider the ingredient list as well as the Nutrition Facts Table on the labels:

- Eliminate products in which sugar is the first ingredient listed. (Other forms or names for sugar include sucrose, fructose, dextrose, glucose-fructose, invert sugar, malt syrup or corn syrup).

- Avoid products that contain saturated or hydrogenated fats (trans fats), such as shortening, hydrogenated oil, lard, tallow, palm or palm kernel oil.

> Cut down the amount of sugar and fat in prepared foods as much as possible.

> Ensure a certain balance between the price of high-nutrient foods and that of low-nutrient foods, in order to offer healthy choices at the lowest possible price.

> Prepare, store and distribute foods safely in order to prevent any form of contamination, and take the necessary precautions to protect students who have food allergies.

Remember to comply with school guidelines concerning food allergies.

- > At fundraising or special events, or on school trips and outings, sell or offer food and beverages that comply with the Framework Policy.
- > In schools that serve breakfast, make sure that breakfast food items meet the criteria specified in the Framework Policy as well as recommendations from *Canada's Food Guide*.
- > Encourage students to drink water regularly throughout the school day and make it easy for them to do so.
- > Reserve caffeinated beverages for school staff areas.

B. IMPROVING THE NUTRITIONAL QUALITY OF FOOD CHOICES

Food service providers can take certain steps to improve the nutritional quality of foods offered in school, and do so for each of the four food groups.

1. Vegetables and Fruit

- > It is important to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Although this may seem difficult to achieve, there are many ways to include vegetables and fruit in the menu.
 - Even if the main course includes a side portion of at least one vegetable, students must also be offered a variety of vegetables and fruit to choose from.
 - Fruits and vegetables may be served in different ways: fresh, raw or cooked, juiced, canned in their own juice, or puréed. Priority should be given to fresh fruit and raw vegetables whenever possible, as these have the most nutritional value.
 - Frozen vegetables and fruit are good alternatives to fresh as they retain their nutritional value and provide variety at an affordable price throughout the year.
 - Adding a salad bar is another interesting option, as students enjoy making their own meals.
- > Choose dark-coloured fruits and vegetables (e.g. green, orange, or red), as these are rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
- > When served as a side dish, potatoes should be boiled, baked or mashed, rather than fried. French fries are to be eliminated from the menu.
- > Steaming (e.g. using a steamer, double boiler, steamer insert) is the best way to cook vegetables to preserve their nutritional value. When boiling vegetables, use leftover cooking water in soups, stocks and sauces to recover any vitamins or minerals that have leached into the water.

2. Grain Products

- > Offer grain products that are lower in fat and sugar, such as low-fat/low-sugar rice cakes, crackers, crispbreads, cereal bars or cookies, etc.
- > Favour grain products that provide at least 2 grams of fibre per serving.
- > When a selection is available preference should go to the grain products shown in the table below. These products can increase the amount of fibre in the students' diet and even reduce the amount of fat consumed.

Opt for:	Rather than:
Brown rice	White rice
Whole-wheat, oat-bran or whole-grain breads, tortillas and pitas	White bread, tortillas and pitas
Whole-grain cereals	Refined cereals
Whole-wheat and whole-grain pasta	Regular pasta
Whole-grain crackers and crispbreads	Refined crackers and crispbreads
Whole-grain cereal bars	Snack bars
Homemade muffins and cookies	Commercial muffins and cookies

- > In order to evaluate the nutritional value of **commercial** grain products sold as desserts or snacks (e.g. muffins, cookies, cereal bars, banana bread) and determine which products to choose, use the criteria below as well as the Nutrition Facts Table and the ingredient list on the package.

Cookies (for 2 medium cookies or approximately 30 grams)*

- Less than 10 grams of sugar
- Less than 7 grams of fat
- Less than 2 grams of saturated and trans fat
- More than 2 grams of fibre

Crackers*

Favour crackers made from whole grains and which contain little saturated and trans fat. Pay special attention to the sodium content, which should not exceed 250 mg per 30 grams of crackers.

Cereal bars (1 bar)*

- Less than 10 grams of sugar
- Less than 5 grams of fat
- Less than 1 gram of saturated and trans fat
- More than 2 grams of fibre

Muffins (approximately 100 grams)*

- Less than 10 grams of sugar
- Less than 5 grams of fat
- Less than 2 grams of saturated and trans fat
- More than 2 grams of fibre

* Source: Marie Breton and Isabelle Émond, *À table en famille* (Montréal: Flammarion Québec, 2001).

- > The nutritional value of homemade grain products (e.g. muffins, cookies, cereal bars, banana bread, pie dough, breading) can be increased by following these tips:
 - Add oat or wheat bran, wheat germ or oat flakes to traditional recipes to increase the amount of dietary fibre.
 - Substitute a small amount of whole-wheat flour for an equal amount of white flour when making pie dough, for example.
 - Replace white flour with whole-wheat breadcrumbs when breading foods, and oven bake.
 - Replace some of the fat in a recipe with unsweetened applesauce or crushed pineapple; this will not alter the taste or texture.
 - Reduce the amount of sugar in a recipe and replace it (or not) with dried, fresh or frozen fruit.

3. Milk and Alternatives

- > Offer students a wide variety of milk products, such as milk, flavoured milk (containing less than 30 grams of sugar per 250 ml), yogurt, yogurt drinks, individually wrapped cheese, fresh cheese, and rice and soymilk beverages fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
- > Incorporate milk products into recipes to increase consumption.
 - Occasionally top dishes like pasta with shredded cheese.
 - Add milk or milk powder to soups and homemade desserts and snacks to boost their nutritional value.
- > Avoid using cream in recipes (e.g. soups, sauces, dishes, desserts).

4. Meat and Alternatives

> Although meat and alternatives are important sources of protein, meats often contain a significant amount of saturated fat. Efforts must be made to reduce their fat content as much as possible:

- Remove the skin and fat from poultry before cooking.
- Choose lean cuts of beef (e.g. lean or extra lean ground beef, eye of round, inside round steak, outside round, strip loin, top sirloin, sirloin tip, cross rib roast, stewing beef).
- Choose lean cuts of pork (e.g. lean or extra lean ground pork, interior round, boned tenderloin end [chop], loin or tenderloin).
- All cuts of veal may be used, since veal is a lean meat.
- Reduce the amount of fat in meat:
 - Trim all visible fat before cooking.
 - Drain meat after cooking.
 - Remove the solid fat from the surface after cooked meat has been refrigerated.
- Replace delicatessen meats (e.g. bacon, sausages, pepperoni, salami, bologna, mock chicken), which contain a significant amount of fat and sodium, with cold meats (e.g. turkey, ham, eye of round, pastrami, chicken and roast beef).

Traditional recipes may be prepared without using deli meats:

- Make pizzas by topping whole-wheat pita bread with cooked chicken, salsa, cheese and various vegetables.
- Make whole-wheat subs using cooked turkey, BBQ sauce, cheese and vegetables.
- Although traditional sausages are a popular dish with the young, they are high in fat. Use veal, turkey or chicken sausages instead, as these contain a bit less fat.
- **Unfried, breaded** meats and fish may be served if they have been reheated or baked in an oven. Use toasted whole-wheat breadcrumbs for chicken nuggets or fish fillets, etc.

> Meat alternatives can also be part of the menu. Here are some tips on how to use them:

- Offer egg dishes such as:
 - Omelettes
 - Quiches
 - Frittatas
 - Egg sauces
 - Egg sandwiches and “guedilles”
- Add, or replace meat with legumes (e.g. lentils, chickpeas, red kidney beans, soybeans) in dishes such as:
 - Chili
 - Spaghetti sauce
 - Shepherd’s pie
 - Mexican burritos

Bean salads and soups can also be included in the menu.

- Substitute, or add, tofu in casseroles. In addition to being economical, with the proper seasoning tofu can earn converts among students. Tofu is also quite versatile: it has a chameleon-like ability to take on the flavours of the foods it is cooked with.

Here are some tips on how to incorporate tofu into recipes and increase its consumption:

- Crumble tofu into spaghetti sauce or meat loaf.
- Replace part of the meat in Mexican dishes (e.g. burritos, fajitas, tacos) with an equal amount of cubed or crumbled tofu.
- Marinate tofu in soy or tamari sauce for several hours and then stir-fry with vegetables.
- Replace part of the mayonnaise in dips and salad dressings with silken tofu.
- Introduce desserts made with soft or silken tofu.

C. SAUCES AND CONDIMENTS

> Sauces are also important as they often enhance the taste of food. However, since certain sauces can be high in fat, care must be taken to reduce their fat content:

- Serve tomato-based sauces rather than cream-based sauces (e.g. Alfredo, cream, hollandaise, carbonara sauce).
- Use milk instead of cream in white or rosé sauces.
- Use low-fat béchamel sauces (i.e. made with 1 tablespoon of fat per 250 ml).
- Use low-sodium, dehydrated sauce mixes (instead of meat stock) to make gravy.
- Whenever possible, remove fat from sauces by refrigerating them.
- Use fruit juice (e.g. lemon, orange), dried fruit or herbs to flavour sauces.
- Use milk instead of cream in cheese sauces.

> Pay special attention to condiments (e.g. ketchup, relish, mustard, mayonnaise), since students often use them in great quantities. Limit quantities served as these products are often high in fat and sugar.

D. OILS AND FATS

> Whenever possible, avoid using fat when cooking. Use low-fat cooking methods such as steaming, baking, braising, poaching, grilling and roasting.

> Avoid adding fat to foods (e.g. pasta, cooked vegetables) before serving.

> Eliminate deep-frying, and avoid pre-fried foods.

> Bake breaded foods to reheat or cook them.

> Use vegetable cooking oils that can withstand high heat (e.g. canola, corn, soybean, sunflower, virgin and extra-virgin olive oil). **Avoid using peanut or nut oil as it could contain traces of protein that can cause allergic reactions.** Other types of vegetable oil (e.g. cartham, flaxseed, nut, sesame, cold-pressed olive oil) are best used cold as salad dressings and seasoning.

> Avoid using butter or margarine for cooking.

> Use non-hydrogenated margarine for spreading.

> Replace part of the mayonnaise in dips and dressing with plain yogurt.

> When making pie crust, avoid using fats containing trans fats (e.g. lard, shortening or any other hydrogenated fat).

E. IMPLEMENTING CHANGES

- > The rate at which changes are implemented may vary depending on their extent. Make sure to allot time to facilitate the transition.
- > We suggest that you introduce changes after a break, such as summer vacation, winter holidays or spring break.
- > Make sure you **replace** eliminated food and meal items with **new healthier choices** in order to keep providing a variety of foods.
- > Remember to include student representatives in decisions concerning school food.

F. HYGIENE AND FOOD SAFETY

- > Certain perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy products and egg dishes are subject to bacterial contamination. Keep cold foods cold at or below 4°C and hot foods hot at or above 60°C.

- Avoid keeping foods in the temperature danger zone—between 4°C and 60°C.
- Do not leave perishable items standing at room temperature.

G. MEALTIME ENVIRONMENT

- > Make sure that eating areas are safe at all times.
- > Provide students with appropriate equipment, in keeping with the school's needs and resources.
- > Make lunchtime an enjoyable part of the day by ensuring that eating areas are pleasant and inviting.
- > Make sure that students have enough time to eat without feeling rushed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONSULT THE FOLLOWING WEB SITES:

MELS

www.mels.gouv.qc.ca

MSSS

www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/sujets/santepub

MAPAQ

www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/mesaliments

www.securitedesaliments.gouv.qc.ca

www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/consommation/qualitedesaliments/allergiesalimentaires

Do it for you! Program

www.vasy.gouv.qc.ca/index_en.html

Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fr-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires

www.aqaa.qc.ca