

3

PAMPHLET

HEALTHY SNACKS

Although students generally eat two of their meals at home, they also consume a certain amount of food in school, given the number of hours they spend there. For many elementary and secondary school students, the meals they eat at home and in school cannot provide all of the daily nutrients they need. Snacks are therefore important for both energy and variety, as they allow students to eat foods different from those eaten at regular meals (e.g. fruit, vegetables, cheese). This pamphlet is intended as a tool for parents to optimize the quality and variety of foods their children eat and for schools to help them develop a healthy snack policy.



COMPOSITION OF A HEALTHY SNACK

Healthy snacks complement regular meals: they provide a boost of energy between meals without spoiling one's appetite for the next meal. Although snacks are not obligatory, growing children and teenagers often need them. Snacks should therefore include foods from at least one of the four food groups:

- > **Vegetables and Fruit** as well as **Grain Products** are rich in carbohydrates (a quick source of energy for the body and brain) and contain vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.
- > **Milk and Alternatives** contain carbohydrates and protein, in addition to providing calcium and vitamin D, which are essential for healthy bones and teeth.
- > **Meat and Alternatives** are rich in protein, which help us feel fuller longer and help build bone, muscle and other tissues.

When preparing snacks, make sure you comply with school guidelines concerning allergies, acceptable foods and containers, etc.

For more information on food allergies, please consult the following Web sites:

- > www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/consommation/qualitedesaliments/allergiesalimentaires
- > www.aqaa.qc.ca

AT THE GROCERY STORE

It may be difficult to make informed food choices when there are so many products on the market. To analyze the nutrient content of a product, it is essential to establish certain criteria using the **Nutrition Facts Table** on food labels. It is also important to check the ingredients listed, particularly those that are listed first, as these are present in the largest amounts. Health Canada provides several tools to help understand nutritional labelling.

- > Products in which sugar or an equivalent is the first ingredient listed are not recommended.
- > Products in which sugar or an equivalent is the second or third ingredient listed should be chosen only occasionally.
- > Products that contain saturated fats should be avoided as much as possible. Lard, palm oil or palm kernel oil, for example, contain saturated fats.
- > Trans fats and their negative effects on health are well known. Because they accumulate in the body and are difficult to eliminate, trans fats should be avoided. They appear in the ingredient list under a variety of names (e.g. shortening, hydrogenated oil and lard) and in the Nutrition Facts Table under "Fat" (Trans Fat).

Sugar and trans fats are not the only things to consider when choosing snacks. Below are some additional tips for choosing healthy snacks.

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Most snacks should include vegetables and fruit in different forms:

- Raw vegetables: carrots, peppers, broccoli, turnip, snow peas, celery, cucumber, cauliflower, etc.
- Vegetable juice
- Fresh fruit: apple, orange, kiwi, clementine, banana, strawberries, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, grapes, etc.
- Dried fruit: raisins, apricots, papayas, cranberries, etc.
- Unsweetened fruit purée
- Unsweetened fruit cups
- Unsweetened fruit juice
- Unsweetened fruit bars
- > Dark-coloured fruits and vegetables (e.g. green, orange, or red) are richer in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
- > It should be noted that the less processed a food is, the more nutritious it is. For example, a raw, unpeeled apple contains more dietary fibre than unsweetened apple-sauce or apple juice.

GRAIN PRODUCTS

- > Offer grain products that are lower in fat and sugar, such as low-fat/low-sugar rice cakes, crackers, crispbreads, cereal bars, homemade muffins and cookies.
- > Choose grain products that provide at least 2 grams of fibre per serving.
- > Choose grain products that meet certain criteria, as indicated on the nutrition label and the ingredient list.

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*

Crackers should be made from whole grains and contain little saturated and trans fat. Pay special attention to 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

Breakfast cereal (approximately 30 grams)*

- Less than 5 grams of sugar (for cereal without fruit)
- Less than 10 grams of sugar (for cereal with fruit)
- Less than 4 grams of fat
- Less than 1 gram of saturated and trans fat
- More than 3 grams of fibre

Homemade 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).

MILK AND ALTERNATIVES

It is important to offer students a wide variety of dairy products, many of which may be eaten as snacks (for example, yogurt, yogurt drinks, individually wrapped cheese and fresh cheese).

MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES

Snacks may also consist of meat alternatives, such as:

- Hard-boiled eggs
- Nuts, seeds and legumes (soybeans, etc.), alone or mixed, with and without dried fruit

Nuts, seeds or legumes mixed with candy should be avoided.

Remember to comply with school guidelines concerning food allergies.

HOMEMADE SNACKS

Below are some tips to boost the nutritional value of homemade snacks such as muffins and cookies:

- > Add oat or wheat bran, wheat germ or oat flakes to traditional recipes to increase the amount of dietary fibre.
- > Replace half 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.

SNACKS AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Students who participate in extracurricular sports or tournaments need nutritious snacks to give them the energy they require. These snacks should combine grain products or fruit and vegetables (which contain carbohydrates) with **milk products** or **meat substitutes** (which contain protein). It should be noted that adolescents need to consume even more food to meet both energy and nutritional requirements.

SPORTS DRINKS

Water is generally the best source of hydration. However, during long, sustained periods of physical activity (e.g. extracurricular sports, tournaments), additional energy and hydration may be necessary. A homemade drink, such as the one described below, may be just as effective as, and more nutritious than, the sports drinks available on the market:

Homemade sports drink

- One cup unsweetened fruit juice
- One cup water
- Pinch of salt

Note: There is some confusion surrounding the terms **energy drinks** and **sports drinks**. Energy drinks contain caffeine, guarana or other stimulants, and should be avoided. Sports drinks contain water, sugar and electrolytes. The homemade sports drink mentioned above is still the best choice, as it not only provides energy but vitamins and antioxidants as well.

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/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires

www.aqaa.qc.ca