

Updated Student Nutrition Program Nutrition Guidelines

Overview of Changes

The Student Nutrition Program (SNP) Nutrition Guidelines support programs to select healthy food and beverages to serve in meal and snack programs across the province. The Guidelines also outline important food safety information, guidance of safe food donations and include resources like sample menus to help program providers plan and purchase nutritious foods.

Why were the Guidelines updated?

The current Guidelines were developed in 2016 and based on the 2007 Canada Food Guide. There have been advances in nutritional science and healthy eating recommendations in recent years.

The 2016 Guidelines refer to the four food groups which are no longer part of the current Canada Food Guide. The new Guidelines provide guiding principles on making healthy choices based on the most recent, evidence-based nutrition science.

Definition of Meal and Snack

The Definition of meal and snack has changed to move away from the 2007 Canada Food Guide food groups categories.

- A meal is made up of at least one vegetable or fruit plus one protein food plus one whole grain food.
- A snack is made up of at least one vegetable or fruit plus either one protein food or whole grain food.

Sodium Threshold

Sodium threshold has changed from 140 milligrams per reference amount to less than or equal to 10%DV per serving size. This change will:

- Make it easier to find healthy choices that meet the threshold, including greater options for low-cost, nutritious protein options such as canned tuna and canned legumes that were difficult to find under the 2016 Guidelines sodium threshold.
- Make it easier for programs to interpret food labels and not have to calculate the number of milligrams per serving.

Dairy Fat Limit

New guidance on dairy fat limits to choose cheese with less than or equal to 20% milk fat when possible.

- This guidance aligns with the 2019 Canada Food Guide and other guidance for child nutrition.
- The Guidelines do not provide guidance on % milk fat for fluid milk but they indicate that fat-free milk should not be offered.

Sugar Limit in Yogurt

Sugar limit in yogurt is set to 11 grams of sugar per 100 gram serving of yogurt.

- This aligns with Health Canada's recommendations to reduce intake of food high in added sugar and the Guidelines' existing limit on sugar for grain products.

Beverage Choices

Flavoured milk and 100% fruit and vegetable juice were moved to the “do not serve” category.

- This recommendation aligns with the 2019 Canada Food Guide to make water the drink of choice.
- The Guidelines continue to recommend milk and dairy foods as good choices for protein foods in SNPs and to recommend vegetables and fruits be served.

Minimally Processed Foods

The Guidelines place a greater emphasis on serving minimally processed foods.

- These foods have less added sodium, sugar and saturated fat.

Dairy Foods and Alternatives

The Guidelines emphasize dairy foods and alternatives as good choices for protein foods.

- The vitamins and minerals provided by milk, yogurt, cheese and fortified soy beverage are important for children’s growth and development.
- Many children and youth do not meet the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for calcium and Vitamin D.