



ONTARIO SCHOOLS HAVE NEW FOOD AND BEVERAGE STANDARDS

SEPTEMBER 2011

All publicly funded schools now have a healthier approach to selling lunches, snacks and drinks as a result of new nutrition standards that came into effect on September 1, 2011.

The School Food and Beverage Policy applies to food and beverages offered for sale in schools:

- in all venues on school property, such as cafeterias, vending machines and tuck shops
- through all programs, including catered lunch programs, and
- at all events on school property, including bake sales and sports events.

How Do the Nutrition Standards Work?

The nutrition standards are based on the principles of healthy eating outlined in Canada's Food Guide. The standards divide all food and beverages into three categories:

- ✓ **Healthiest (Sell Most)** – These products are the healthiest options and generally have higher levels of essential nutrients and lower amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium. They must make up at least 80 per cent of all food choices that are available for sale. For example, if a cafeteria offers 10 items for sale, at least eight must fall under the “sell most” category.
- ✓ **Healthy (Sell Less)** – Compared to “sell most” products, these products may have slightly higher amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium. They cannot make up more than 20 per cent of all food choices that are available for sale.
- ✗ **Not Permitted** – These are products that generally contain few or no essential nutrients and/or contain high amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium (e.g., deep-fried and other fried foods, confectionery). Food and beverages in this category may not be sold in schools.

Adopting these new standards can be simple and seamless. In fact, a typical school cafeteria menu may look very similar to the menu in place before the introduction of the nutrition standards. For example, a hamburger would be considered a “Sell Most” choice if it is prepared with extra-lean ground meat, whole grain bun, fresh lettuce and tomato. However, it would be considered “not permitted for sale” if it is prepared with regular ground meat, white bun and processed cheese.

Exemptions to the Standards

The standards do not apply to food and beverages that are:

- brought from home or purchased off of school premises and are not for resale in schools
- offered in schools to students at no cost
- available for purchase during field trips off of school premises
- sold in schools for non-school purposes, e.g., food sold by an outside organization that is using the gymnasium after school hours for a non-school-related event
- sold for fundraising activities that occur off school premises
- sold in staff rooms.

“Special-Event” Days

Schools are allowed up to 10 “special-event” days throughout the year, which are exempt from the standards. Although “special-event” days allow greater flexibility with food and beverages, schools are encouraged to consider selling food and beverages that meet the nutrition standards or non-food-related items.

A Healthier Learning Environment

Introducing nutrition standards is one part of the government’s plan to develop healthy learning environments and improve student achievement and well-being in Ontario schools. Research has shown that children who eat a healthy diet are more attentive, more ready to learn and more likely to be successful in school.

Learn More:

The School Food and Beverage policy and other information on how Ontario is making schools healthier can be found at www.ontario.ca/healthyschools

More Resources:

- Visit **Canada’s Food Guide** for information on healthy eating, nutrition labels and more at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/
- Check **Foodland Ontario** for information on local and seasonal foods throughout the province at foodlandontario.ca
- Find healthy recipes, plus information on nutrition, menu planning and healthy weights at **EatRight Ontario** at eatrightontario.ca

