

NUTRITION

Nutrition Requirements of the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)

The regulations under the Nutrition Requirements of the CCEYA mandate that all infants and children attending child care centres in Ontario are provided with enough safe and nutritious food to meet their individual energy and nutrient requirements.

According to the [CCEYA](#) operators shall ensure that:

- All meals, snacks and beverages must meet the recommendations set out in [Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#), [Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide- First Nations, Inuit and Metis](#) or [Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants](#).
- Parents provide written feeding instructions for all children less than one year of age.
- Parents provide written instructions for all children with special dietary needs. Food and drink provided by parents must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the food was sent to the centre.
- Food and drink is stored in a manner that maximizes its nutritive value and minimizes the risk of contamination or spoilage.
- A list of children with food allergies and the specifics of the allergy is posted in clear view in both the cooking and serving areas of the child care centre.
- Complete menus are posted in an obvious and visible location for the current and following week.
- Menus are kept for 30 days following the last day it was applicable.
- Any child receiving child care for six hours or more must be provided 2 snacks, in addition to any meals provided.
- Drinking water must be available at all times.

Healthy Eating For Young Children

Caregivers and parents play a key role in developing children's eating habits. Whether the child is an [infant, toddler or preschooler](#), children's eating is influenced by the types of foods provided, how meals are structured, role modeling and the family and social environment. Positive early childhood experiences regarding food and the social environment in which children eat are critical to the development of healthy eating habits later in life.

Children aged two years and older can get the nutrients and calories they need for healthy growth and development by following the healthy eating pattern in [Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#). Because they have small stomachs that tend to fill up quickly, young children need small nutritious meals and snacks each day. Most prefer meals and snacks on a regular schedule and in familiar surroundings. The amount of food eaten at each meal and snack will vary from day-to-day depending on a child's appetite, activity level and whether they are experiencing a growth spurt. Their appetite may also fluctuate when they are excited or overly tired. Over time, the variations in the amount a child eats tend to average out to provide the calories and nutrients they need. This is especially true if a child is encouraged to eat healthy foods when hungry and to stop when full.

Most children, if provided with access to a variety of foods from each of the food groups from Canada's Food Guide, will consume the nutrients and energy they need to grow and develop. However, if they do not have access to foods from all food groups on a regular basis, they will not be able to consume a nutritionally adequate diet. Providing healthy food choices is the parents/caregiver's responsibility. The child needs to be given responsibility for how much he or she eats. Forcing a child to eat can upset their natural appetite control system and may lead to overeating and possibly overweight. It is important for parents and caregivers to support children in developing healthy food choices by providing healthy foods as the normal choice and by being positive role models for healthy eating.

[Nutri-eSTEP](#) is an online nutrition-risk screening questionnaire that is a fast and simple way for parents to find out if their toddler or preschooler is a healthy eater.

The questionnaire has 17 short questions that ask parents about their child's eating and activity habits. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete and parents will receive immediate personalized feedback such as:

- Find out what is going well for them and their child
- Tips on how to improve eating and activity habits
- Links to trusted nutrition resources, tools and recipes

This [Nutri-eSTEP flyer](#) can be printed and posted at your centre or emailed to interested families.

Canada's Food Guide Recommendations for Young Children

	Number of servings		What is One Food Guide Serving?	Make Each Food Guide Serving Count!
	Age (years)			
	2-3	4-8		
Vegetables and Fruit	4	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 125mL (1/2 cup) fresh, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit • 125mL (1/2 cup) cooked or 250mL (1 cup) raw leafy greens • 125 mL (1/2 cup) 100% unsweetened fruit juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day • Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt • Have vegetables more often than juice
Grain Products	3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread or 1/2 bagel • 125mL (1/2 cup) cooked rice or pasta • 30g cold or 175mL (3/4 cup) hot cereal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make at least half of your grain products whole wheat each day • Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt
Milk and Alternatives	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250mL (1 cup) milk or fortified soy beverage • 175g (3/4 cup) yogurt • 50g (1 1/2 oz) cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink skim, 1% or 2% milk each day • Select lower fat milk alternatives
Meat and Alternatives	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75g (2 1/2 oz)/125mL (1/2 cup) cooked fish, shellfish, lean meat • 175mL (3/4 cup) cooked legumes or tofu • 2 eggs • 30mL (2 Tbsp) peanut or nut butters • 60mL (1/4 cup) nuts and seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have meat alternatives, such as beans, lentils and tofu often. • Eat at least two food guide servings of fish each week • Select lean meat alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt

Foods to include are foods from each of the four food groups; vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, meat and alternatives.

Foods to limit are foods that are low in nutrients and high in calories, fat, sugar and salt such as cakes, pastries, chocolate and candies, cookies and granola bars, doughnuts and muffins, ice cream and frozen desserts, french fries, potato chips, nachos and other salty snacks, fruit flavoured drinks, soft drinks, sports and energy drinks, and sweetened hot or cold drinks.

Planning Meals and Snacks

Meals, snacks and beverages offered to children must meet the recommendations in [Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#). Meals should have foods from all four food groups with two different types of vegetables or fruit. Snacks provided should have foods from at least two different food groups. When planning meals and snacks it is important to remember that there is a wide variation in how much food each child needs. For example, a two year old may eat half a slice of bread while a four year old is more likely to eat a whole slice. It's better to start with smaller portions and provide more food if the child asks for more.

Canada's Food Guide Food Group	Child-size Servings
Vegetables and Fruit	1/4 to 1 whole fruit or 1/3-1/2 cup (80-125 mL)
Grain Products	1/2 to 1 slice or 1/4 to 1/2 cup (50-125 mL)
Milk and Alternatives	1/2 to 3/4 cup (125-175 mL)
Meat and Alternatives	1 to 2 oz. (30-60 grams)

Menu Planning

Planning nutritious meals and snacks that offer variety can be a challenge. A well-planned menu simplifies shopping and food preparation and gives parents some assurance that their child is being well looked after. Involve staff who will be cooking, preparing, serving or shopping for food as well as parents when developing the menu.

Planning a cycle menu is a good way to ensure variety and will help with planning and shopping. A cycle menu is a series of menus planned for a period of time (e.g. four weeks). The menu is different for each day during the cycle. After the four week cycle is completed, the menu is then repeated in the same order. Plan to have different cycle menus based on the seasons to take advantage of seasonal vegetables and fruit.

Post menus for the current and following weeks in a noticeable place for parents to see. Keep used menus for at least 30 days after the last day for which it is applicable.

Steps to Planning a Menu

1. Gather menu planning tools

- Guidelines for selecting nutritious foods for the menu
- Old sample menus for ideas
- Recipes
- A list of allergies/intolerances/food avoidances for children in your centre

2. Select the lunch meal for each day of the week

- Select a Meat or Alternative for each day
 - a) Choose a different meat or alternative serving for each day (e.g. poultry, fish, beef, pork, eggs, lentils).
 - b) For variety, include at least one meat alternative per week such as legumes (kidney beans, chick peas, lentils) and tofu.
 - c) Recommended fish include light canned tuna*, salmon, cod, haddock, sole and tilapia. *[Health Canada](#) advises that children 1-4 years old have no more than 75 grams a week (1 Food Guide Serving) of canned albacore (white) tuna. Children 5-11 years old should have no more than 150 grams a week (2 Food Guide Servings). This advice does not apply to canned light tuna which is relatively low in mercury.
 - d) Remember, cheese is NOT a meat alternative
- Select a Grain Product
 - Choose a different grain product each day (e.g. whole grain breads, brown rice, pitas, tortillas, whole grain pastas)
 - Serve primarily whole grains
- Select a Vegetable
 - Choose a different vegetable each day
 - Include both cooked and raw vegetables for variety

- Choose dark green (e.g. green beans, broccoli, green pepper) and orange vegetables (e.g. carrots, squash, sweet potato) more often
- Consider various shapes and textures (grated, chopped, mashed, sliced, cubed, sticks, wedges, etc.)
- Select a Fruit
 - Choose fruit more often than fruit juice to increase fibre intake
 - Serve fruits (and vegetables) that are in season and locally grown
- Select Milk or Milk alternatives
 - Serve milk as a beverage, added to soup or in a dessert. Offer 1% or 2% milk each day for children over 2 years of age. Serve whole milk (3.25% milk fat) for children less than 2 years of age
 - Include milk alternatives such as cheese, yogurt or fortified soy beverage

3. Plan the morning and afternoon snack to complement the lunch meal

- Each snack should include food from 2 food groups from Canada's Food Guide. Include foods from the vegetables and fruit food group in at least one snack each day
- Snacks should be high in nutrients, but low in sugar, salt and fat and should not be sticky to the teeth
- Keep portion sizes small
- Serve snacks 1½ to 2 hours before meals

4. Finalize the menu

- Complete the **Menu Planning Checklist**
- Aim for a three to four week menu cycle and try not to repeat items within that rotation
- Introduce at least one new food during the menu cycle for the children to try. Serve them with foods that are well-liked
- Celebrate different cultures by introducing a variety of ethnic food choices

Foods and beverages not recommended for child care settings

- Peanuts, nuts, nut and seed butters if there are children with allergies
- Foods containing artificial trans-fat (e.g. hydrogenated oils, partially hydrogenated oils, shortenings, hydrogenated hard margarines, frozen pizza, muffin mixes)
- Fruit-flavoured drinks that are not 100% fruit juice
- Pop, sports drinks and energy drinks
- Coffee and caffeinated tea-based drinks
- Ice cream treats and popsicles
- Flavoured gelatins
- Cake, cupcakes and doughnuts
- Toaster pastries
- Chocolate or yogurt-covered granola bars or granola bars that contain candy, chocolate or marshmallows
- Candy, chocolate and marshmallows
- Full fat cream cheese
- Full fat sour cream, table cream, coffee cream, whipped cream and creamers
- High fat, salty snacks (e.g. potato chips, nacho chips, cheese puffs)
- Deep-fried foods (e.g. chicken nuggets, French fries, fish sticks, samosas, spring rolls)
- Hot dogs, sausages and bacon
- Cured meats (e.g. salami, ham, pepperoni, bologna)
- Instant noodle soups
- Fruit-flavoured candy, gummies, rolls or chews

The following items should only be offered in **small** amounts:

- Jams, jellies, marmalades, syrup, fruit butters, light cream cheese
- Sauces, salsas, dips, gravy, condiments (e.g. pickles, relish, mustard)
- Soft margarines, vegetable oils (e.g. olive, canola, soybean), butter, salad dressings, mayonnaise

Menu Planning Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide when planning menus, and again when you are finished to recheck the menus you have planned.

Foods within each food group are varied daily.

- A different meat and alternative is served each day of the week
- A variety of grain products are served
- In season fruit and vegetables are served

100% Fruit juice is served NO MORE THAN once a day, if at all. If offered, limit to no more than 125 mL (1/2 cup). Offer water throughout the day.

- Sweetened foods (i.e. cake, cookies, drinks), sticky foods (i.e. dried fruit), high fat and high salt foods (ex. Processed meats, chips) are not included.

Each lunch includes:

- 1 serving of Vegetables
- 1 serving of Fruit
- 1 serving of Grain Products
- 1 serving of Milk and Alternatives
- 1 serving of Meat and Alternatives

- Each snack includes foods from at least two food groups.
- There is a beverage included with every meal and snack (milk, water or juice).
- Foods with different colours, shapes, textures, flavours and temperatures are served.
- The food served is size appropriate and easy for children to eat (i.e. finger foods).
- New foods are periodically introduced.
- There is adequate time and staff to prepare the food.
- Menu items are within the budget.

Choking Prevention

Although any food can cause choking, some foods are considered to be more unsafe than others. Children should always be supervised and be seated when they are eating. Provide a calm eating environment and give the children time to eat slowly and carefully.

How to reduce the risk of choking:

- Do not offer popcorn or hard round candies
- Cut round foods like grapes or cherry tomatoes in half or quarters
- Grate hard vegetables and fruits such as carrots or apples or cut them into narrow strips
- Spread peanut butter, nut butter or soy butter thinly. Never serve it right off the spoon
- If served, cut hot dogs and sausages into long strips, and then into bite-size pieces

Food Allergies

Health Canada has [fact sheets](#) on each of the common food allergens: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, sesame, seafood, mustard and sulphites. Here are some tips on dealing with food allergies:

- Establish a written policy on parent/caregiver responsibilities
- Develop a plan with the parent to meet the child's special dietary needs, inform other children and their parents (if necessary) and have a plan in place to respond to an emergency due to exposure
- Allow for substitutions in the menu to meet the child's special dietary needs or if not feasible, encourage parents to supply their own substitutions and keep them clearly labeled in proper storage.
- Wash hands regularly to prevent cross-contamination when preparing foods
- Use separate cooking equipment and utensils and keep work surfaces clean to avoid cross-contamination between foods
- Read all food labels carefully. Ingredients in processed foods change over time
- Become familiar with the terms on food labels which identify ingredients made from problem foods
- Never assume that foods are free of a problem ingredient
- If in doubt, do not use a suspected food or product
- If homemade treats are brought from home, ask parents to attach an ingredient list to ensure the food is safe for allergic children
- Teach the children not to share their food or utensils by explaining about allergies and the importance of this health issue
- Review the use of food in crafts or activities that involve touching the food
- Wash all surfaces, such as table tops or toys that may come in contact with problem foods

Picky Eaters

Tips for Dealing with the Picky Eater

- Keep it simple and serve child-size portions
- Serve foods separately and attractively
- Include finger foods
- Include a variety of foods
- Avoid day/food association: If it's Tuesday it must be meatloaf!
- Do not use sweets or desserts as a reward for finishing a meal. This will teach children that dessert is the most desirable part of the meal, increases their preference for sweet foods and may reduce acceptance of non-sweet foods
- Introduce new foods often and serve them with a food they already like
- Never assume what a child will or will not like to eat. Offer it to them and let them decide
- Never force a child to eat a food. Simply offer new foods often. Remember that it may take more than 10 exposures to a new food before a child will eat it
- Be a good role model! If you eat a variety of foods, children will likely want to try them too!

Creating a Healthy Eating Environment

Follow the Division of Responsibility in Feeding

Caregivers and children have different “jobs” at meal time. Struggles happen when one tries to do the other one’s “job”.

- **Caregivers** are responsible for **what, when** and **where** food is offered.
- **Children** are responsible for **how much** they eat and **whether** or not they eat.

Make sure children are comfortable by:

- having comfortable chairs that allow the child to reach the table
- using cups that are easy to hold
- using the proper utensil size

Create a special place at the table by:

- having them design their own place mat or centerpieces
- using special cups or dishes or straws

Practice proper hygiene by:

- washing hands before eating
- brushing teeth after meals

Eating with the children will:

- give them a role model to teach them healthy eating habits
- help them develop social skills
- set a good example

Consider the child’s development by:

- offering age appropriate foods
- setting appropriate limits and expectations

Offer child-size servings:

- offer small amounts of food, too much can be overwhelming
- allows you to offer a greater variety of foods

Be consistent with expectations:

- decide upon table manners and stick to them
- have a list of table expectations and make sure the children know what they are

Avoid pressuring children to eat:

- children who are bribed or coaxed to try a new food are less likely to go back to that food than those allowed to accept or reject it on their own

Involve children in food skills activities

- Check out [Cook Up Some Fun](#) for age appropriate food skills, tips on cooking with children and recipe ideas

Resources

For more information on nutrition in Child Care Centres, contact a Registered Dietitian at Algoma Public Health at 705-942-4646 or toll-free at 1-866-892-0172. Support with staff training and parent education is available.

You can also speak to a Registered Dietitian at EatRight Ontario which provides free information on nutrition and healthy eating. Call toll-free in Ontario at 1-877-510-5102.

Websites

- [EatRight Ontario](#)
- [Dietitians of Canada](#)
- [Health Canada](#)
- [Anaphylaxis Canada](#)
- [Canadian Food Inspection Agency: Food Recalls/Allergy Alerts](#)
- [Allergy/Asthma Information Association](#)