

Nutritious & Healthy Foods in Schools

Guidelines for Canteen Operators

produced by
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This booklet was prepared by the National Nutrition Centre with the aim of providing relevant information and practical guidelines for school canteen operators.

It must however be noted that these guidelines are for healthy children and young people, aged 4 to 18 years, and may not satisfy the specific requirements of those with particular diseases or conditions

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Planning Healthy Lunches

A well planned lunch can provide at least one third of a child's daily nutrients. Canteens should provide complete meals, and individual food options, which are tasty, economical, attractive, as well as nutritious.

A complete meal contains foods from each of the Caribbean food groups. To help meet daily calcium requirements, include dairy or other calcium-rich foods with meals. With a little thought beforehand, preparing healthy lunches does not have to be difficult or time-consuming.

A healthy lunch does not mean a boring lunch. Children can still enjoy treats such as slice of coconut bread, a small bran muffin, one or two cookies, a small pack of chips, or a small scoop of ice cream.



Sample Meals Using the Caribbean Food Groups

SAMPLE MEAL 1

Baked Chicken
Rice and Peas
Sliced Tomato

Apple
Low Fat Yogurt
Water

SAMPLE MEAL 3

Vegetable Macaroni Pie
Three Bean Salad

Orange
Water

SAMPLE MEAL 2

Whole Wheat Tuna Sub
Lettuce, Tomato, Shredded
Cabbage and Carrot

Banana Peanut Butter
Smoothie

SAMPLE MEAL 4

Deluxe Pizza topped with:
Soy Mince
Finely Grated Carrot
Sweet Pepper
Pineapple
Cheese

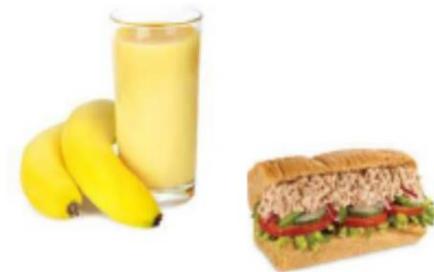
100% Apple Juice

SAMPLE MEAL 5

Shepherd's Pie

Minced Beef mixed with Eggplant, Lentils and Spinach
Potato crushed with Butternut Squash or Pumpkin
Cheese Topping

Fruit Salad
Water



Adequate nutrition is essential for proper growth and development. In addition, healthy eating helps to prevent diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension. Too many Barbadian children are already overweight or obese, and the numbers continue to rise.

To promote healthier eating habits, all meals for children and young people should include:

MORE

- Fruits and vegetables
- Foods high in calcium and iron (see chart on next page)

AND LESS

- Greasy and fatty foods
- Sugar and sugary foods
- Salt and salty foods

Ideas for Healthier Meal Preparation

Although school canteens offer a variety of foods, many options are high in fat, salt or sugar, such as macaroni pie, fried chicken, French fries, juice drinks and other sugary beverages. As a result, children can choose an unhealthy mix of foods. Canteen operators can improve the nutritional standard of their menus by following some of the suggestions listed below:

- Prepare foods with little or no oil, margarine, butter or shortening.
- Remove skin from chicken and turkey, and visible fat from meat, before cooking.
- Limit the frequency of high fat foods such as macaroni pie, fried chicken and French fries.
- Soy granules, which are a good source of protein and naturally low in fat, can be used as a partial or complete replacement for minced meat in dishes such as shepherd's pie and lasagne.
- Consider the addition of dried peas, beans or lentils in dishes such as soup, stew or roti and use less meat or no meat at all.
- If milk is required in meal preparation, use skimmed or 1% low fat milk.
- Vegetables should be served daily. They can be incorporated into dishes such as mixed vegetables in macaroni pie, eggplant in lasagne or shepherd's pie, or pumpkin combined with crushed potatoes. Vegetables can also be offered as a side dish.
- Fruits should be served daily. Fruit salads, fruit smoothies, and 100% fruit juices can be considered as alternatives to whole fruits.

Ideas for Healthier Meal Preparation continued

- Include more whole grains such as whole wheat bread, whole wheat wraps, brown rice, whole wheat or high fibre pasta and whole wheat flour in muffins, dumplings and baked goods..
- Suitable beverages should be readily available. These include water, 100% fruit juices, yogurt drinks, calcium-enriched soy beverages, and beverages or smoothies made with skimmed or 1% low fat milk: limit added sugar.
- Salt should **not** be made available at counters or at tables.
- Consider supplying condiments, like ketchup and mayonnaise, in individual packages.

It is important to remember that unfamiliar foods may need to be combined with more familiar foods, or prepared in more innovative ways, in order to improve acceptance.

Why We Need Nutritious and Healthy Foods in Schools

Proper nutrition starts from the womb and should continue throughout life. A healthy child makes for a happy child, and school canteen operators should offer nutritious and healthy meals to children and young people. Exposing children to a wide variety of nutritious and healthy foods from an early age encourages the development of good eating habits, which can last a lifetime.

The Caribbean food groups should be used as a guide for planning meals for children and young people.

