

School food and beverage policy (P/PM 150)

The Ontario Ministry of Education introduced the [School Food and Beverage Policy \(P/PM 150\)](#) in January 2010. The purpose of the policy is to ensure healthy food and beverages are sold in all elementary and secondary schools.

Schools must be in full compliance with the policy beginning September 1, 2011.

The policy **applies** to food and beverages sold:

- in all venues on school property such as the 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

The policy **does not apply** to food and beverages:

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

The policy includes nutrition standards, which outline nutrition criteria for food and beverages sold in Ontario schools.

How do the [nutrition standards](#) work?

The nutrition standards are based on the principles of healthy eating outlined in *Canada's Food Guide*. They are separated into nutrition standards for food and nutrition standards for beverages.

Standards for food are divided into the four food groups from *Canada's Food Guide* plus Mixed Dishes (i.e., products that contain more than one food group such as pizza, pasta, soup, salads, and sandwiches) and Miscellaneous Items (i.e., items to be used in limited amounts such as condiments, sauces, dips and dressings; and Confectionary, which is not permitted for sale).



Standards for beverages are separate for elementary schools and secondary schools.

The [nutrition standards](#) divide all food and beverages into three categories:

<p>Sell Most ($\geq 80\%$)</p> <p>These are healthier options and generally have higher levels of essential nutrients and lower amounts of fat, sugar, and/or sodium.</p>	<p>Sell Less ($\leq 20\%$)</p> <p>The products may have slightly higher amounts of fat, sugar, and/or sodium than food and beverages in the <i>Sell Most</i> category.</p>	<p>Not Permitted for Sale</p> <p>The products generally have few essential nutrients and/or contain high amounts of fat, sugar, and/or sodium (e.g., deep-fried and other fried foods, confectionery).</p>
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Often a type of food or beverage (e.g., bread, meat, cheese, milk) will fit in all three of the above categories, depending on its nutritional value. To determine whether a specific product may be sold in schools, it is necessary to read the *Nutrition Facts Table* and the *ingredient list*, and compare this information with the nutrition criteria outlined for each of the three categories.

Example of nutrition criteria for bread (under 'Grain Products')

<p>Sell Most ($\geq 80\%$)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole grain is first item on ingredient list• And saturated fat: $\leq 2g$• And sodium: $\leq 240mg$• And fibre: $\geq 2g$ <p>Examples: Whole grain breads, buns Whole grain pizza dough</p>	<p>Sell Less ($\leq 20\%$)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saturated fat: $\leq 2g$• And sodium: $\leq 480mg$ <p>Examples: White (enriched) breads White (enriched) pizza dough</p>
<p>Not Permitted for Sale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saturated fat: $> 2g$• Or sodium: $> 480mg$ <p>Examples: Some cheese breads, scones and biscuits</p>	



Food should always be prepared in a healthier way

The standards specify to use cooking methods requiring little or no added fat or sodium, such as baking, barbecuing, boiling, broiling, grilling, microwaving, poaching, roasting, steaming, or stir-frying.

The 80/20 rule

"Sell most" foods must make up at least 80% of all food choices that are available for sale. "Sell less" foods cannot make up more than 20% of all food choices available for sale. The same rule applies for beverages.

Examples:

- Cafeteria: If a school offers 10 food items for sale, at least eight must be "Sell Most". The same rule applies for beverages
- Tuck shop: If a school offers 5 food items for sale, at least four must be from "Sell Most" and only one can be from "Sell Less"
- Special Food Day: If only offering one choice (e.g., pizza) for a special food day, then it must be "Sell Most"

Why a School Food and Beverage Policy?

The school food and beverage policy will help students choose healthy food and beverages. It will also reinforce the nutrition messages taught through the various subjects in the Ontario curriculum.

The school environment influences students' attitudes, preferences, and behaviours. The intention of the policy is to ensure the food and beverages sold in schools contribute to students' healthy growth and development. As a result, this will contribute to reducing students' risk of developing serious, chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Additional requirements in the policy

- Comply with the "Trans Fat Standards" regulations which was made under the Education Act, for full compliance Sept. 2008
- Ensure access to drinking water
- Comply with strategies outlined in the school boards anaphylaxis policy
- Accommodate religious or cultural needs by addressing the diversity of students and staff.
- Avoid offering food/beverages as a reward
- Practice safe food handling and storage
- Sell food/beverages produced in Ontario



Adopt environmentally friendly practices

“Special-event” days

Schools may choose up to 10 days during the school year that can be exempt from the nutrition standards. These may be for cultural occasions or traditional events; events where it may be difficult to find foods and beverages that meet the nutrition standards. Although in the policy, it does state that schools are encouraged to sell foods and beverages that are healthy and meet the standards — even for these “special-event” days.

Public Health encourages schools to go beyond the [School Food and Beverage Policy \(P/PM 150\)](#)

Public Health encourages a ‘whole school’ or comprehensive approach to create a healthy school nutrition environment in [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) schools. This approach will engage the entire school community in promoting consistent messages about healthy eating in the school, in the classroom and in homes and the community. A healthy school nutrition environment exists when students get the same message about food, nutrition and healthy eating **wherever** food is available. For example, food and beverages, whether they are for a classroom celebration or for a special event day, should be healthy. In the classroom, nutrition information should be accurate and up-to date. In the school, teachers, coaches, other school staff and volunteers should role model healthy eating behaviours. Parents and school community members can also help to create a healthy school nutrition environment. They can be involved in school breakfast programs, attend workshops on nutrition and participate in take-home nutrition activities. By getting everyone involved in promoting nutrition and healthy eating, it will be easy for students to make healthy food and beverages choices.

Offer food and beverages with Maximum [Nutritional Value](#)

Public Health encourages schools to take the [P/PM 150 Nutrition Standards](#) one step further by applying the [Nutrition Tools for Schools[©] Nutrition Standards](#) to **all** food and beverages **offered** or **sold**. The NTS Nutrition Standards are adapted from the Ministry of Education’s School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM) Nutrition Standards. They include an additional category to identify food and beverages that meet or exceed P/PM 150 **and** provide Maximum Nutritional Value. By using the NTS Nutrition Standards, schools will be complying with P/PM 150.



Public health is working with your school board

Public health works in partnership with The York Catholic District School Board and the York Region District School Board to assist schools in creating a healthy school nutrition environment. Visit the [York Region Community and Health Services](#) website for resources and tip sheets on implementing the School Food and Beverage policy (P/PM 150) in [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) schools.

More Resources

Online learning modules from the Ministry of Education, including educational materials for downloading can be found at www.ontario.ca/healthyschools

