

# MORE FRUITS AND VEGGIES PLEASE

*Canada's Food Guide* recommends eating plenty of vegetables of fruit. Half our plates should be made up of vegetables and fruits.

## How to help your child eat more fruit and vegetables:

- Include fruit at breakfast; try adding half cup of banana slices or berries to cereal
- Include fruit and vegetables in lunch bags daily
- Keep washed fruit and vegetable sticks ready where children can easily reach them
- Serve a healthy snack after school that includes a fruit or vegetable; try serving fresh fruit slices with cheese or yogurt
- Set a good example by eating lots of vegetables and fruit yourself



This material is provided by York Region Public Health. For more information about creating a healthy school food culture, visit [brightbites.ca](http://brightbites.ca).

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# BE “FOOD SAFE” WHEN PACKING LUNCHES

Keep children safe by using these four simple food safety steps when preparing and packing your child’s lunch and snacks:

- **Clean:** Wash your hands before preparing food. Wash all fruits and vegetables (even pre-washed or those with skins or rinds) under cool running water. Wash lunch bags and storage containers and water bottles every day.
- **Chill:** Use an insulated lunch bag with ice packs to ensure that food is kept cold at 4°C (40°F) or below. Refrigerate foods prepared ahead of time until packing the lunch.
- **Cook:** Use an insulated thermal container to keep lunches hot at 60°C (140°F) or above. Bring soups to a rolling boil and stir prior to packing in lunch bag (thermal container).
- **Separate:** Store lunches above and away from any raw meat, poultry or seafood in the fridge. Throw out any hazardous food (e.g. cheese, sandwiches, yogurt, etc.) that has returned home in the lunch bag.



This information is provided by York Region Public Health. For more tips on packing school lunches or general safe food handling practices, please visit [Be Food Safe when packing lunches](https://www.york.ca/foodsafety) and [york.ca/foodsafety](https://www.york.ca/foodsafety).

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# REWARD KIDS WITHOUT USING FOOD

Rewarding kids with treats has become part of our culture and is often used to recognize children for success at school and home. While it may be a quick and easy way to recognize a child's hard work, success or good behaviour, it sends a negative message to kids and instills unhealthy habits, promoting a preference for 'junk food' over healthy food and teaching kids to eat when they may not be hungry.

Try the following suggestions to reward children:

- Offer verbal praise by saying 'thank you' or 'great job'
- Offer non-food items such as stickers, pencils, bookmarks, balls and hacky sacks
- Offer extra privileges such as an extra story at bedtime or extra playtime

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# FOR THIRST CHOOSE WATER

Did you know that a can of pop has nine teaspoons of sugar and a large bottle of 'fruit drink' can have 18 teaspoons of sugar? Even a small container of chocolate milk has four teaspoons of added sugar.

Beverages like pop, 'fruit drinks,' sports drinks and even 100 per cent fruit juice and chocolate or flavoured milks are replacing healthier drinks, such as white milk and water. This can result in the development of unhealthy eating habits in children's diets, which is often carried through into adulthood.



To help your kids quench their thirst and to keep them hydrated all day long, send water to school in a reusable bottle. To help keep water cold put it in the refrigerator overnight and add ice cubes in the morning.

This material is provided by York Region Public Health. For more information about how you can help your child's school create a healthy school nutrition environment, visit [www.brightbites.ca](http://www.brightbites.ca).

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# HALLOWEEN CANDY – A STICKY TOPIC

Ever wonder how to help children manage Halloween treats as part of a healthy diet? Provide structure using the following guidelines:

1. After trick-or-treating, let your children empty their candy bag, sort it and eat as much candy as they want. Let them do the same the next day.
2. On the third day, have them put the candy away and only allow a couple of pieces to be eaten during meals and/or snacks.
3. Schedule meals and snacks at regular times. Keep the routine of letting your child have Halloween candy only at these times; this prevents candy from spoiling your child's diet.
4. Offer milk, fruit or vegetables with candy to include some nutrition.



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# HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELF

A healthy body image can contribute to higher self-esteem in children, often leading to healthier and more positive life choices. Try these simple ways to help your child have a positive body image.

**Be a positive role model.** Be aware of the messages you convey about your own body and the comments you make about the appearance of others. If children hear adults express dissatisfaction with their bodies, they may place inappropriate importance on physical appearance and think that being an adult means being unhappy with your body.



**Banish teasing.** Teach children that judging people about their weight or looks is unacceptable.

**Encourage kids to focus on their abilities rather than their appearance.** Help them focus on things they are good at – talk about their “insides” rather than their “outsides.”

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# WHAT'S IN YOUR CHILD'S LUNCH?

All parents want their child to eat well, but packing healthy lunches can often be a challenge! Here are some ideas to make lunches a little less stressful:

- Keep a list of healthy lunch and snack ideas
- Involve your children in planning their lunches; let them pick their fruits and vegetables
- While packaged cookies and granola bars are convenient, pack fruits or vegetables for at least one snack
- Soup, leftovers, rice or pasta dishes can be heated in the morning and stored in pre-heated thermal containers
- Send a reusable water bottle



Children will not always eat their entire lunch. Be sure to offer other healthy meals and snacks throughout the day.

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# MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE

Since 2011, Ontario schools have been required to follow the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy (PPM 150) for food and beverages sold in schools. Some schools are complementing this policy by ensuring healthier foods and behaviours are wherever food and beverages are available (not just sold):

- Offering healthier food and beverages for classroom celebrations and school events
- Ensuring teachers and volunteers role model healthy eating behaviours
- Planning school-wide events with the help of students to promote healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks throughout the year



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# GET YOUR FAMILY ON THE ROAD TO HEALTHY

## EATING

The food children eat influences their growth, development, health and learning ability. However, today's food environment makes it easy to eat a diet high in fat, added sugar and salt rather than having them as occasional treats.

To help get your family on the road to healthy eating, try the following:

- Pack a healthy lunch that includes plenty of vegetables and fruit, whole grain and protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.
- Keep healthy foods that are ready-to-eat on hand for after school or bedtime snacks (e.g. cut up fruit, vegetables, yogurt, nuts, low-fat cheese)
- Include your children in planning meals – including packing their lunches
- Teach your children to cook – it is a skill that allows them to make healthy choices later in life



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# HOW CAN I GET MY CHILD TO EAT BREAKFAST?

Do you rush out the door for work with only a coffee in-hand? Children learn by watching their parents! Set a good example by giving yourself a few extra minutes in the morning to enjoy a healthy breakfast with your family. Here are some tips to make breakfasts quick and easy.

- Make pancakes or waffles ahead of time and freeze them. You can quickly take them out of the freezer, pop them in the toaster and serve them with some fruit and milk
- Boil and peel several eggs or make a few omelets one evening. Store them in the fridge. Serve them with toast and fruit
- Make a wrap by spreading peanut butter on a whole wheat pita or tortilla and wrapping the pita or tortilla around a banana
- Make a breakfast shake with milk, yogurt, whole oats, frozen berries and a banana
- Enjoy a high-fibre cereal with milk and sliced fruit



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# HEALTHY CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS

Let's make celebrations healthy! Celebrating special events such as birthdays, holidays or special occasions in the classroom can be a lot of fun for kids, but often the food served at these celebrations is not healthy. Let's help children practise what they are learning about nutrition in the classroom. If you are sending food for classroom celebrations, try some of these healthier ideas, remembering to keep allergy restrictions in mind:

- Fresh fruit kabobs
- Whole grain crackers and cheese cubes
- Fresh orange wedges or watermelon slices
- Yogurt and nut-free granola for 'make your own parfaits'
- Vegetable sticks in the shape of a skeleton with "brain" dip (for Halloween parties)



Consider non-food treats as well, such as pencils and erasers, playdough, bouncy balls, yo-yo's or skipping ropes.

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# 'HOW' WE EAT CAN IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

Eating healthy foods can contribute to positive mental health, and so can **how** you eat. Eating behaviours, such as how often you eat meals together and involving children in meal preparation builds social connectedness and valuable cooking skills. These behaviours contribute to more resilient children and improved mental health.

Boost your children's mental health:

- Slow down and take time to sit, relax, talk and enjoy good food together
- Recognize when you are hungry or full to guide when you eat
- Trust your child to decide for himself/herself **which foods** and **how much** to eat
- Eat together with family and friends more often
- Involve the whole family in meal preparation
- Teach children how to cook
- Feel good about what you eat



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# HEALTHY EATING, HEALTHY MINDS

We know that healthy eating is good for a healthy heart, but did you know that good nutrition is also good for a healthy mind?

Choosing whole, unprocessed foods may improve mood, alertness, concentration, performance, memory and the ability to acquire knowledge. It has also been linked to improved symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression in [adults and children](#).



Choose more of the following foods for a healthy mind:

- Vegetables and fruit, particularly dark green and orange
- Whole grains like oatmeal and barley
- Milk or fortified soy beverages, yogurt or other fermented foods
- Beans and other legumes
- Fish and lean meats

Healthy eating for mental health isn't just **what** you eat; it's also about **how** you eat! Planning, cooking and enjoying meals with family and friends, and teaching your children to cook, promotes social and emotional connections, which can help build positive mental health.

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# CANADA HAS A NEW FOOD GUIDE

In January 2019, Health Canada released a new [Canada's Food Guide](#). This guide acknowledges that healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat. The food guide encourages us to eat foods that are not only better for us, but also for our planet, by focusing on vegetables and fruit, whole grains and plant-based protein foods.

**Here are the Healthy Eating Recommendations from Canada's Food Guide, for when planning meals for yourself and your family:**

- [Be mindful of your eating habits](#)
- [Cook more often](#)
- [Enjoy your food](#)
- [Eat meals with others](#)

**In addition, make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day:**

- [Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods.](#) Choose protein foods that come from plants more often
- [Limit highly processed foods.](#) If you choose these foods, eat them less often and in small amounts
- [Make water your drink of choice](#)
- [Use food labels](#)
- [Be aware that food marketing can influence your choices](#)

Visit [Canada.ca/Foodguide](https://Canada.ca/Foodguide) to access supporting resources such as recipes.

Visit [www.york.ca/nutrition](http://www.york.ca/nutrition) or [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca) for more information and additional nutrition resources. To speak to a registered dietitian at no cost, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

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