

At-A-Glance GUIDE

to Ontario's School Food and Beverage Policy



- What is the policy?
- What are the nutrition standards?
- How can I help?
- Where can I find more information?

What is the policy?

The Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy requires healthier food and beverage choices to be offered for sale in Ontario's publicly funded (Catholic and public) elementary and secondary schools. Food and beverages offered for sale on school premises, for school purposes, must comply with the requirements* set out in the policy, including the nutrition standards.

The nutrition standards apply to all food and beverages that are offered for sale on school property for school purposes:

- in all venues, such as cafeterias, vending machines and tuck shops
- through all programs, including catered lunches, such as pizza days or hot meal programs
- at school events such as bake sales and sporting events

The nutrition standards do NOT apply to food and beverages that are:

- 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., 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

*The requirements are explained in the policy, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/150.html

Some school boards have additional requirements in their own policies. Check with your school or school board about requirements beyond those in Ontario's School Food and Beverage Policy.

Healthy food for healthy students

Selling nutritious food and beverages is one way to help make the school a healthier place for students to learn. School is where students spend much of their time during critical growth years, when they need nutritious food to grow, be active and develop into healthy adults.



Studies show that well-nourished students feel better, behave better and are more attentive and ready to learn.

It's not enough to provide students with healthier choices alongside unhealthy choices; studies show that when less-healthy food (e.g., chips, chocolate, French fries) is available, children and teens tend to choose those items over healthier food.

A school food and beverage policy reinforces healthy eating lessons taught in the classroom and helps to make sure that the healthy choice is the easy choice for all students.

What are the nutrition standards?

The nutrition standards are based on Canada’s Food Guide and specify nutrition criteria that food and beverages must meet in order to be offered for sale in schools. Specific nutrition standards have been established for food and for beverages.

The nutrition standards divide food and beverages into three categories:

Sell Most	Sell Less	Not Permitted for Sale
<p>Products in this category are the healthiest options and generally have higher levels of essential nutrients and lower amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium.</p> <p>They must make up at least 80% of all food choices and all beverage choices that are offered for sale in all venues, through all programs and at all events.</p>	<p>Compared to Sell Most products, these products may have slightly higher amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium.</p> <p>They must make up no more than 20% of all food choices and all beverage choices that are offered for sale in all venues, through all programs and at all events.</p>	<p>These are products that generally contain few or no essential nutrients and/or contain high amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium.</p> <p>Food and beverages in this category must not be sold in schools.</p>

The nutrition standards determine the types of food and beverages that can be offered for sale in schools.

Examples of the types of food that may be offered for sale	Examples of the types of food that are Not Permitted for Sale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh vegetables and fruit • Whole grain breads and buns • Oven-baked potato wedges • Plain popcorn, low-fat baked chips and lower-sodium pretzels • Lower-fat yogurt • Lean, lower-sodium meat and meat alternatives (e.g., tofu) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candy, chewing gum, chocolate bars • Higher-fat, low-fibre muffins and cookies • Deep-fried French fries • Regular potato chips, tortilla chips and corn chips • Higher-fat, higher-sodium deli meats and hot dogs

The nutritional value of a food or beverage can vary depending on serving size, recipe or brand – and that will determine the category to which a food or beverage belongs (*Sell Most*, *Sell Less* or *Not Permitted for Sale*).

If you are involved in organizing school programs or activities that include the sale of food and/or beverages, compare information on a product’s food label (i.e., the Nutrition Facts table and ingredient list) to the nutrition standards to determine which category the product fits into.

For details on the nutrition standards and the steps to classify food and beverages, refer to the School Food and Beverage Policy Quick Reference Guide, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/PPM150Quick_Reference_Guide_2010.pdf.

GOOD TO KNOW

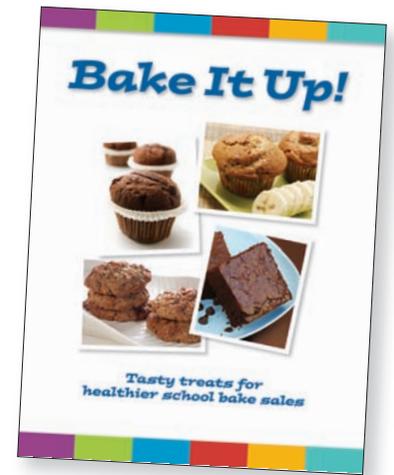
SPECIAL-EVENT DAYS

Throughout the year, schools are allowed up to 10 special-event days (or fewer, as determined by the school board), when they are exempt from the nutrition standards.

Any activities or fundraisers carried out on school premises must be designated as a special-event if the food or beverages offered for sale do not meet the nutrition standards.

It is up to the school principal, in consultation with the school council, to choose which days will be designated as special-events. Principals should also consult with students when making these decisions.

Schools are still encouraged to offer healthy options on special-event days. For ideas to make bake sales and other school events healthier, check out *Bake It Up!*, available at: www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Resources.aspx.



How can I help?

There is a lot that you can do to help make the School Food and Beverage Policy work in your school.

Become informed

- Talk to your principal about what your school is doing to meet the School Food and Beverage Policy requirements.
- Find out if your school has a healthy eating action committee and what it is doing to promote healthy eating.

Get involved

- Volunteer to participate on your school's healthy eating action committee; if your school doesn't have one, talk to your principal about starting one.
- Help with healthy eating programs already under way. For example, volunteer to deliver healthy lunches to classrooms.
- Organize or participate in the planning of healthy school events.
- Research healthier fundraising activities and make recommendations to the school council or student council; help support healthier fundraisers.

Be supportive

- Provide food and beverages from the *Sell Most* category for classroom and school celebrations.
- Pack school lunches and snacks with healthier foods from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide.



GET IN ON THE ACTION!

A healthy eating action committee is a group of people that could include parents, students, food service employees and volunteers who work as a team to promote healthy eating and take action on school nutrition issues. Contact your local public health unit to find out if public health staff can help your committee.

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WHAT ABOUT PIZZA DAYS?

Pizza days do not have to be designated as special-event days as long as the pizza meets the nutrition standards in the School Food and Beverage Policy. Get the nutrition information from your school's pizza supplier and compare it to the nutrition standards. If the pizza does not meet the nutrition standards, ask if the recipe and/or ingredients can be changed to meet the nutrition standards; otherwise, the pizza can only be offered for sale on a designated special-event day.



A bit about beverages

The nutrition standards for beverages are different in elementary and secondary schools.

- Plain water, milk (2% milk fat or less) and 100% fruit juices all meet the *Sell Most* nutrition criteria in both elementary and secondary schools.
- Sports drinks, energy drinks and caffeinated beverages such as coffee and tea are *Not Permitted for Sale* in elementary or secondary schools.
- In elementary schools, all beverages (except water) must be sold in containers that are 250 mL or less.
- In secondary schools, caffeine-free, low-calorie beverages such as diet, decaffeinated soft drinks are permitted as *Sell Less* choices.



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KEEPING IT HEALTHY

Although the policy does not apply to food and beverages brought to school by students (e.g., in packed lunches and snacks) or shared during classroom celebrations, students are encouraged to have healthier choices that will give them nutrients and energy to help them be successful at school.



Where can I find more information?

For more information, tools and resources on the School Food and Beverage Policy, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/policy.html.

To learn more about what's happening with the School Food and Beverage Policy in your school, contact your school principal.

For answers to questions about healthy eating, contact a registered dietitian by phone or email (free of charge). Call the EatRight Ontario toll-free information service at 1-877-510-510-2 or visit www.ontario.ca/eatright.

To find your local public health unit, visit the Association of Local Public Health Agencies at www.alphaweb.org/ont_health_units.asp.

For healthier baked-good recipes for lunches, snacks and school events such as celebrations and bake sales, check out the resource *Bake It Up!* at www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Resources.aspx.

To learn more about healthy eating, check out Canada's Food Guide, available online at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide.



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Developed and distributed by the
Nutrition Resource Centre, Ontario Public Health Association

www.nutritionrc.ca

October 2010

Funded by the
Government of Ontario