

Choosing Foods

Use *Canada's Food Guide* to help decide what food group a food belongs to and use the nutrition standards to determine if the food or beverage is a **Choose Most Often** or a **Choose Sometimes** food.

Choose Most Often foods:

- are fresh vegetables and fruit; whole grain products; pasteurized and unsweetened milk and alternatives; lean meats, fish, poultry, eggs and meat alternatives such as lentils, beans and tofu
- contain a variety of nutrients for healthy growth and development
- are generally lower in fat, sugar and salt and higher in fibre than **Choose Sometimes** foods.

The **Choose Sometimes** category provides minimum nutrition standards for foods and beverages.

Choose Sometimes foods:

- are often processed foods
- are a source of nutrients for healthy growth and development
- are generally higher in fat, sugar and salt and lower in fibre than **Choose Most Often** foods.

It is best for health to select **Choose Most Often** foods whenever possible.

Health and education are interdependent. The equation is a simple one.

**Better Health =
Better Learners**

Reading the Label

Find out which food group the food belongs to by looking at the ingredient list.

Ingredients are listed in order of weight, from the most to the least. The first few ingredients usually help to identify the food group that product belongs to. For each food group, look for specific ingredients.

In the yogurt example to the right, skim milk is the first ingredient, therefore this product belongs in the Milk & Alternatives group.

Amount (Serving Size)

All of the information in the Nutrition Facts table is based on an amount of food. The amount of food is listed at the top of the Nutrition Facts table.

The amount of food is often called a serving size.

Keep these points in mind:

- The amount of food on the Nutrition Facts table can differ from a *Canada Food Guide* serving size.
- Single serving packages may be more or less than one *Canada Food Guide* serving.

What is % Daily Value

The % Daily Value (% DV) is in the Nutrition Facts table on food packages. It provides a quick overview of the nutrient profile of a food.

You can use the % DV to compare two different food products to make a healthier choice.

You can use the % DV to choose products that are higher in the nutrients you want more of and lower in the nutrients you want less of.

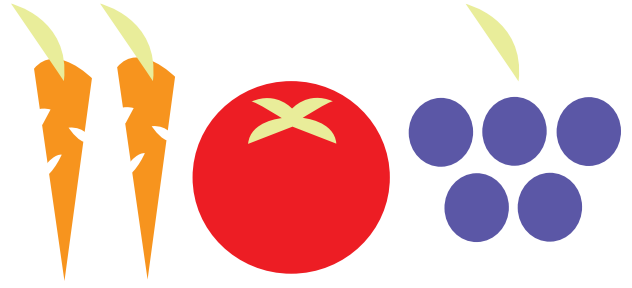
For more information visit Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php

A Nutrition Facts Table

Yogurt Example

Nutrition Facts	
Per 175 g (¾ cup)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 130	
Fat 3.5 g	5%
Saturated 2.0 g + Trans 0.2 g	8%
Cholesterol 20 mg	
Sodium 60 mg	3%
Carbohydrate 8 g	3%
Fibre 0 g	0%
Sugars 4 g	
Protein 17 g	
Vitamin A	2%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	20%
Iron	0%

Ingredients: Skim milk, cream, active bacterial cultures.



Vegetables & Fruit

The food belongs in the Vegetables and Fruit group if:

- The first ingredient is a vegetable or fruit.
- Sugar is not the first ingredient (sugar comes in many forms such as honey, molasses, fruit juice and fruit juice concentrate).

Choose dark green and orange vegetables often.

Vegetable and fruit juice must be 100% unsweetened. With these juices, water may be the first ingredient. Make sure the juice does not have the words “made with real fruit juice” or “beverage, punch, cocktail, drink”.



Choose Most Often

To meet the **Choose Most Often** standard, the food needs to have:

- no sugar, salt, or fat added

Possible examples of Choose Most Often foods:

- fresh vegetables and fruit
- frozen vegetables or fruit without added sugar, salt, fat or sauces
- unsweetened applesauce

Choose Sometimes

Use the Nutrition Facts table on the food package to see if the food meets the **Choose Sometimes** standard:

Vegetables and Fruit

Per specific amount listed on label

Fat 5 g or less

Saturated 2 g or less
+ Trans 0 g

Sodium 300 mg or less

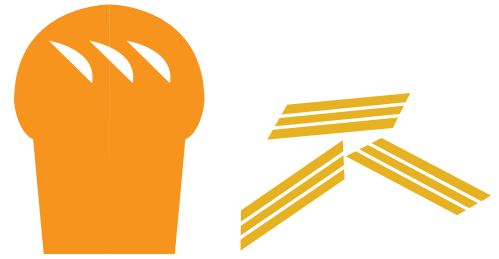
Sugars

- Not the first ingredient

Possible examples of Choose Sometimes foods:

- fresh, frozen or canned vegetables with added sugar, salt, fat or sauces
- fruit canned in water, juice and light syrup
- low sodium canned vegetable soup
- 100% unsweetened juice
- dried fruit, 100% fruit leathers, 100% fruit or vegetables bars

Grain Products



The food belongs in the Grain Products group if:

- The first ingredient is a whole grain, enriched wheat flour or rice.

When comparing grain products, choose the ones with more fibre.

Choose Most Often

To meet the **Choose Most Often** standard:

- a whole grain must be the first ingredient
- sugar cannot be the first or second ingredient (sugar comes in many forms such as honey, molasses, fruit juice, fruit juice concentrate)

Possible examples of Choose Most Often foods:

- whole grain bread, buns, tortillas, pita bread, baked bannock
- whole grain pasta
- brown or wild rice
- barley or quinoa
- whole grain unsweetened or low sugar cereal
- unsweetened oatmeal

Choose Sometimes

Use the Nutrition Facts table on the food package to see if the food meets the **Choose Sometimes** standard:

Grain Products

Per specific amount listed on label

Fat 7 g or less

Saturated 2 g or less
+ Trans 0 g

Sodium 400 mg or less

Sugars

- 12 g or less
- Not the first ingredient

Possible examples of Choose Sometimes foods:

- enriched white bread, buns, tortillas, pita bread, bannock
- enriched pasta
- white rice
- pancakes and waffles
- muffins and loaves
- granola bars (not coated)
- plain popcorn
- rice cakes
- crackers



Milk and Alternatives



The food belongs in the Milk and Alternatives group if:

- The first ingredient is milk or a milk product, not including cream; or
- water is the first ingredient and the second ingredient is soy.

Choose milk daily for vitamin D.

Almond, rice and other similar beverages are not appropriate milk alternatives because they do not contain the level of protein found in milk or fortified soy beverage.



Choose Most Often

To meet the **Choose Most Often** standard, the food needs to:

- have no sugar added (sugar comes in many forms such as honey, molasses, fruit juice and fruit juice concentrate)
- be low in fat

Possible examples of Choose Most Often foods:

- skim, 1% or 2% milk
- fortified, unflavoured soy beverages
- low fat evaporated milk
- plain and unsweetened yogurt

Choose Sometimes

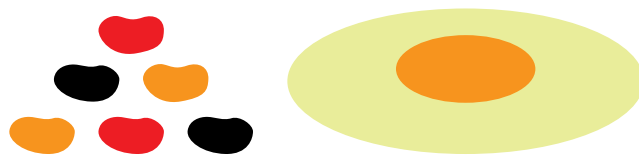
Use the Nutrition Facts table on the food package to see if the food meets the **Choose Sometimes** standard.

Milk and Alternatives
<i>Per specific amount listed on label</i>
Fat 10 g or less
+ Trans 0.5 g or less
Sodium 350 mg or less
Sugars 25 g or less
Calcium 10% DV or more

Possible examples of Choose Sometimes foods:

- whole milk
- flavoured and chocolate milk
- fortified, flavoured soy beverages
- flavoured yogurt
- pudding made with milk
- hot chocolate made with milk
- cheese and string cheese

Meat and Alternatives



The food belongs in the Meat and Alternatives group if:

- The first ingredient listed is a meat (beef, pork, lamb, wild meat, etc), fish, shellfish, poultry, egg, a legume (lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, etc), nut, seed, tofu or soy.

Include a variety of fish and meat alternatives, such as beans and lentils.



Choose Most Often

To meet the **Choose Most Often** standard, the food needs to be:

- lean, with no breading
- prepared with little or no added fat, salt, or sugar

Possible examples of **Choose Most Often** foods:

- roasted, baked or grilled meat, chicken or fish
- wild meat if butchered in an approved facility
- lean ground meat
- cooked eggs
- canned tuna, salmon and chicken with no salt or oil added
- cooked dried beans, peas and lentils
- tofu and soy burgers
- unsweetened and unsalted seeds, nuts and nut butters

Choose Sometimes

Use the Nutrition Facts table on the food package to see if the food meets the **Choose Sometimes** standard:

Meat and Alternatives

Per specific amount listed on label

Fat 15 g or less

Saturated 5 g or less
+ Trans 0.5 g or less

Sodium 450 mg or less

Sugars

- Not the first ingredient

Protein 5 g or more

Possible examples of **Choose Sometimes** foods:

- fish canned in oil
- breaded fish, meat and chicken
- canned beans and beans with sauce
- lean deli meat such as ham and turkey
- salted and sweetened seeds, nuts and nut butters



Mixed Dishes

The food belongs in the Mixed Dishes group if:

- It contains foods from at least two of the four food groups according to *Canada's Food Guide*.

Choose Most Often

Use the Nutrition Facts table on the food package to see if the food meets the **Choose Most Often** standard.

- the food has to meet the criteria for fat, sodium, sugar, fibre **AND** at least one of the following: Vitamin A, C, calcium or iron.

Mixed Dishes
<i>Per specific amount listed on label</i>
Fat 10 g or less
Saturated 2 g or less + Trans 0.5 g or less
Sodium 700 mg or less
Sugars - Not the first or second ingredient
Fibre 2 g or more
AND
Vitamin A, C, Calcium or Iron - <u>At least</u> one nutrient is 10% DV or more

Possible examples of **Choose Most Often** foods:

- sub or pita sandwiches
- wraps
- tuna and cracker snack kits
- fruit and yogurt smoothies
- frozen entrees that meet the standard

Choose Sometimes

Use the Nutrition Facts table on the food package to see if the food meets the **Choose Sometimes** standard.

- the food has to meet the criteria for fat, sodium, sugar and either fibre **OR** one of the following: Vitamin A, C, calcium or iron.

Mixed Dishes
<i>Per specific amount listed on label</i>
Fat 15 g or less
Saturated 6 g or less + Trans 0.5 g or less
Sodium 700 mg or less
Sugars - Not the first or second ingredient
Fibre 2 g or more
OR
Vitamin A, C, Calcium or Iron - <u>At least</u> one nutrient is 10% DV or more

Possible examples of **Choose Sometimes** foods:

- canned soup or stew
- pizza, soft tacos, quesadillas, or fajitas
- stir fry meat and vegetables
- frozen entrees that meet the standard



Other Things to Consider

Food Preparation

This tool helps you select healthier foods and beverages, but remember, how the food is prepared also affects nutritional value. For example, deep-frying food or sweetening it with sugar makes food less nutritious.

“Homemade” foods can be healthier than store bought products. Recipes can be changed to reduce the amount of fat, sugar and salt and increase the fibre content.

Variety

No one food provides all the nutrients for good health. Choose a variety of foods from all four food groups in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*.

Appeal

Make the healthier choice the easier choice by ensuring healthy foods in schools look, taste, and smell appealing.

Cultural Foods

Traditional foods, from a variety of cultures, help celebrate diversity. Try bannock, naan, lentils, bok choy, kefir or hummus.

Allergies & Other Medical Conditions

This tool supports healthy eating for all. Some students may have specialized needs that require a clinical diet. Check the school for policies regarding allergies, type 1 diabetes and other medical conditions.

