

# Healthy Food and Drink Guidance – Schools

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# Healthy eating is important

Good nutrition is essential for the healthy growth and development of children and young people. Children and young people eat much of their food each weekday at school. Good nutrition affects students' behaviour, learning, concentration and energy, as well as their physical health. When students eat a nutritious diet, they find it easier to learn. Teachers report improvements in students' attendance, attention, behaviour and levels of concentration in schools where healthy eating is accepted practice.

# Purpose

This *Healthy Food and Drink Guidance – Schools* (Guidance) helps your school develop a policy to promote and provide healthy foods and drinks. Establishing and following this policy shows your commitment to improving the wellbeing of students, staff and the school community.

The Guidance supports school boards to invest in wellbeing. Having a school policy sends a consistent message that the whole school is practising nutrition education as part of the curriculum. It is about creating supportive environments for children and young people where healthy choices are easy.

This Guidance enables children and young people to:

- access healthy foods and drinks at school
- develop healthy food and drink preferences
- learn to make positive choices about foods and drinks.

# Scope

The Guidance applies to:

- all foods and drinks provided by or available to buy in a primary school, kura, secondary school or wharekura
- food for special occasions or celebrations
- free or charitable food provided to schools, kura and wharekura
- gifts of food or drink to students
- external suppliers providing food in schools.

The Guidance excludes:

- foods and drinks that students and staff bring to school to eat or drink.

# Principles

The principles of this Guidance are as follows.

1. Offer a variety of healthy foods from the four food groups:
  - plenty of vegetables and fruit
  - grain foods, mostly wholegrain and naturally high in fibre
  - milk and milk products, mostly low- and reduced-fat
  - legumes, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry (eg, chicken) and/or red meat with fat removed.
2. Food should be prepared with or contain minimal saturated fat, salt (sodium) and added sugar, and should be mostly whole or less processed.

This means:

- foods containing moderate amounts of saturated fat, salt and/or added sugar may be available in small portions (eg, some baked goods)
- no deep-fried foods
- no confectionery (eg, sweets and chocolate).

3. Offer only water and unflavoured milk as drink options.

This means:

- no sugar-sweetened drinks
- no drinks containing 'intense' (artificial) sweeteners
- no fruit or vegetable juices (including 100 percent juice, no-added-sugar varieties).

# Developing a school policy

This Guidance is to help schools, families and whānau create a healthier food environment. In developing or reviewing a food and drink policy, you can arrive at a shared philosophy about all aspects of foods and drinks served at your school.

As part of your review of policies and practices, you should take into account any regulations that govern food and nutrition and food hygiene.

When developing a policy for your school, you should consider:

- the needs of different cultures and religious groups and people with special dietary needs, including those with allergies and intolerances (eg, gluten-free), vegetarians and vegans
- where your school provides or sells meals, making available healthy food and drink choices that are appropriate for a wide range of children and young people
- discouraging products that are inconsistent with this Guidance
- encouraging sustainable, seasonal and locally grown foods and drinks, where possible.

# Classifying foods and drinks

The Guidance identifies the healthy options for the foods and drinks a school provides. It classifies foods and drinks with colour codes – green, amber and red – as detailed in the table below. These classifications are for use in this Guidance only. They provide a practical way to categorise foods as healthy or less healthy.

<b>Green items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are a good source of nutrition</li><li>• are the basis of a healthy diet</li><li>• are generally lower in saturated fat, salt and added sugar</li><li>• are mostly whole and less processed</li><li>• come from the four food groups: vegetables and fruit; grain foods (mostly wholegrain and those naturally high in fibre); milk and milk products (mostly low fat); and legumes, seafood, eggs and meat with fat removed.</li></ul>
<b>Amber items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are not part of an everyday diet</li><li>• may have some nutritional value</li><li>• are often more processed</li><li>• in large serving sizes, can contribute to consuming excess kilojoules/calories.</li></ul>
<b>Red items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have poor nutritional value</li><li>• are high in saturated fat, salt and/or added sugars</li><li>• can contribute to consuming excess kilojoules/calories</li><li>• are often highly processed foods and drinks.</li></ul>

Healthy foods and drinks should be the easy choice. Healthy options should make up at least 75 percent of the foods and drinks available.

Schools should manage the availability of foods classified as green, amber and red as follows.

<b>Green items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are the main kinds of the foods and drinks available</li><li>• are displayed prominently on shelves, benches, fridges, cabinets and vending machines</li><li>• are always available in sufficient quantities to be the main option.</li></ul>
<b>Amber items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are 'selected carefully' by canteen operators and managers, and do not dominate canteen menus</li><li>• may be available in limited amounts and portion sizes (according to the nutrient criteria tables – see the next section)</li><li>• are not prominently displayed at the expense of foods classified as green.</li></ul>
<b>Red items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are not available or are phased out over time in line with each school's implementation plan.</li></ul>

# Health Star Rating

The Health Star Rating system<sup>1</sup> is a front-of-pack labelling system that rates the nutritional profile of packaged foods. It helps you to compare the nutritional value of products that you typically see shelved side by side in a grocery shop. The system assigns a rating from half a star to five stars. The more stars a product has, the healthier it is. The star rating allows you to compare products within a similar category only. For example, the system might help you to choose between one breakfast cereal and another, but not between yoghurt and pasta sauce.

This Guidance uses a minimum Health Star Rating (HSR) of 3.5 as an indication that a packaged item is 'healthy'. If an HSR for a particular food or drink is unavailable, you can assess how healthy it is by referring to this Guidance for the nutrient cut-offs and description of the category it fits in.

Please refer to *useful definitions* (page 15).

## Nutrient criteria tables

The nutrient criteria tables help you to classify foods and drinks as green, amber or red. See the 'Classifying foods and drinks' section for detailed descriptions of each of these categories.

### Vegetables and fruit

Vegetables	
Green	Fresh, frozen, canned (and drained) and dried vegetables, including potatoes, kūmara, taro, cassava and kamokamo
Amber	Vegetable products (eg, creamed corn) with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Red	Vegetable products with an HSR of $< 3.5$

  

Fruit	
Green	Fresh and frozen fruit, and canned fruit in natural juice, drained
Amber	Fruit products with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$ $\leq 30$ g dried fruit as an ingredient or part of a fruit and nut mix
Red	Fruit products with an HSR of $< 3.5$ $> 30$ g dried fruit on its own or as an ingredient or part of a fruit and nut mix

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see [www.healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/How-to-use-health-stars](http://www.healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/How-to-use-health-stars)

## Grains, cereals and breads

<b>Breads and crackers</b>	
Green	All wholegrain, multigrain, wheatmeal and wholemeal bread with $\geq 5$ g fibre per 100 g and $< 450$ mg sodium per 100 g Higher-fibre, lower-sodium varieties of wraps and pita bread All wholegrain, multigrain, wheatmeal and wholemeal crispbreads and crackers with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Amber	Other bread products with $< 5$ g fibre and/or $\geq 450$ mg sodium per 100 g All other crispbreads and crackers with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Red	All other crispbreads and crackers with an HSR of $< 3.5$

<b>Breakfast cereals</b>	
Green	Wholegrain breakfast cereal and porridge with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$ and $\leq 15$ g sugar per 100 g
Amber	Other breakfast cereal with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Red	Breakfast cereals that do not meet the green or amber criteria

<b>Other grains</b>	
Green	Wholegrain and brown rice, wholemeal pasta and noodles, quinoa, oats, buckwheat, rye
Amber	Refined grains and white rice, plain pasta and unflavoured noodles and couscous
Red	Flavoured packets of grains, rice, pasta and noodles

## Milk and milk products

Milk	
Green	Unsweetened low-fat milk and plant-based milks (eg, soy, rice, almond, oat) with added calcium and vitamin B12
Amber	Unsweetened full-fat milk and plant-based milks (eg, soy, rice, almond, oat) with added calcium and vitamin B12
Red	All sweetened milk drinks

Milk products	
Green	<p>Reduced- or low-fat milk products with an HSR of <math>\geq 3.5</math>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yoghurt and dairy food (<math>\leq 150</math> g portion)</li> <li>• custard (<math>\leq 150</math> g portion)</li> <li>• cheese (<math>\leq 40</math> g portion)</li> </ul>
Amber	<p>Full-fat milk products with an HSR of <math>\geq 3.5</math>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yoghurt and dairy food (<math>\leq 150</math> g portion)</li> <li>• custard (<math>\leq 150</math> g portion)</li> <li>• cheese (<math>\leq 40</math> g portion)</li> </ul> <p>Reduced- or low-fat cream, sour cream and cream cheese</p> <p>Lite<sup>2</sup> coconut milk or coconut cream, or coconut cream diluted with water</p>
Red	<p>Full-fat milk products with an HSR of <math>&lt; 3.5</math>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yoghurt and dairy food (<math>&gt; 150</math> g portion)</li> <li>• custard (<math>&gt; 150</math> g portion)</li> <li>• cheese (<math>&gt; 40</math> g portion)</li> <li>• full-fat cream, sour cream and cream cheese</li> <li>• frozen desserts, eg, ice cream</li> <li>• full-fat coconut milk and coconut cream</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> 'Lite' refers to a version of the standard variety that is reduced in fat, salt, energy and/or sugar.

## Legumes, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry (eg, chicken) and red meat

Legumes	
Green	Fresh, dried or canned legumes (drained and rinsed) – eg, beans, peas, red kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas, split peas, tofu and baked beans
Amber	
Red	

Nuts <sup>3</sup> and seeds	
Green	Unsalted nuts and seeds with no added sugar
Amber	Salted nuts and seeds ( $\leq 30$ g portion, with no added sugar) All nuts and seeds with dried fruit $\leq 30$ g
Red	Salted nuts and seeds ( $> 30$ g portion) Sugared or candy-coated nuts and seeds Nuts and seeds with confectionery <sup>4</sup>

Fish and other seafood	
Green	Fresh fish or seafood Frozen and canned fish or seafood with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Amber	Fish or seafood with an HSR of $< 3.5$ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><math>\leq 50</math> g in sandwiches, rolls, wraps or salads</li> <li><math>\leq 120</math> g as a meal</li> </ul>
Red	Fish or seafood that does not meet the amber criteria

Poultry (chicken and turkey)	
Green	Fresh or frozen poultry with fat removed Poultry with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Amber	Processed poultry (eg, deli or smoked meat, luncheon, loaf) with an HSR of $< 3.5$ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><math>\leq 50</math> g in sandwiches, rolls, wraps or salads</li> <li><math>\leq 120</math> g as a meal</li> </ul>
Red	Processed poultry that does not meet the amber criteria Sausages served either as part of a meal or as an individual item

<sup>3</sup> Exposure to peanuts can have severe consequences for children and young people who are allergic to those products. Your school should consider limiting exposure to these items if you have students with allergies.

<sup>4</sup> 'Confectionery' includes boiled sweets, toffees and caramels, fudge, fondants, gums (including sugar-free gums), pastilles and jellies, chocolate, fruit leathers, yoghurt-covered items, candied fruit and nuts, and compound chocolate.

<b>Red meat</b>	
Green	Meat with fat removed Cooked mince with fat drained Processed meat with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$
Amber	Processed meat with an HSR of $< 3.5$ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>\leq 50</math> g in sandwiches, rolls, wraps or salads</li> <li>• <math>\leq 120</math> g as a meal</li> <li>• dried meat products with an HSR of <math>\geq 3.5</math> and <math>\leq 800</math> kJ per packet</li> </ul>
Red	Meat where fat is visible Cooked mince without the fat drained Processed meat that does not meet the amber criteria Sausages served either as part of a meal or as an individual item

<b>Eggs</b>	
Green	Eggs
Amber	
Red	

## Mixed meals and ready-to-eat meals

<b>Mixed meals and ready-to-eat meals (two or more items or ingredients from different food groups, eg, pizza, lasagne, macaroni cheese, soup)</b>	
Green	Meals that contain vegetables and/or fruit and at least 75 percent green ingredients <sup>5</sup> and no more than 25 percent of amber ingredients, as assessed by a visual check or by referring to the ingredient list
Amber	Meals that contain vegetables and/or fruit and are prepared with green and amber ingredients only
Red	Meals that contain no vegetables, fruit or green items or ingredients

<b>Sandwiches and wraps</b>	
Green	Sandwiches and wraps prepared with vegetables and green ingredients only, including the bread
Amber	Sandwiches and wraps prepared with vegetables and green and amber ingredients only, including the bread
Red	Sandwiches and wraps that do not meet the amber criteria

<b>Sushi</b>	
Green	Sushi prepared with mostly green ingredients (eg, sushi made with either white or brown rice)
Amber	Other sushi, except for sushi containing deep-fried ingredients
Red	Sushi containing deep-fried ingredients

<sup>5</sup> Foods not classified as amber or red (eg, cornflour or baking powder) can also be included.

## Fats and oils, spreads, sauces, dressings, condiments and deep-fried foods

<b>Fats, oils and spreads</b>	
Green	No-added-salt spreads, eg, nut butter Vegetable oils, eg, canola, olive, rice bran, sunflower, soya bean, flaxseed, peanut or sesame
Amber	Standard spreads A single serve of butter ( $\leq 10$ g)
Red	Saturated fats and oils, eg, lard, palm oil and coconut oil A single serve of butter ( $> 10$ g)

<b>Sauces and dressings</b>	
Green	Salad dressings, mayonnaise, tomato sauce with reduced fat, sugar and salt Use in small amounts or serve on the side
Amber	Standard salad dressings, mayonnaise and tomato sauce Use in small amounts or serve on the side
Red	

<b>Sweet condiments</b>	
Green	Reduced-sugar jam or commercially made compote
Amber	Standard jam or commercially made compote, and honey ( $< 1$ tablespoon portion)
Red	

<b>Deep-fried foods</b>	
Green	
Amber	
Red	All deep-fried foods

## Packaged snack foods and confectionery

Packaged snack foods <sup>6</sup>	
Green	
Amber	Packaged snack foods with an HSR of $\geq 3.5$ and $\leq 800$ kJ per packet
Red	Packaged snack foods with an HSR of $< 3.5$ or $> 800$ kJ per packet

  

Confectionery	
Green	
Amber	
Red	All confectionery

## Baked items

Green	
Amber	<p>Packaged or unpackaged baked items must contain some wholemeal flour, wholegrains (eg, oats, bran, seeds) and/or fruit or vegetables (eg, fresh, frozen, canned or dried)</p> <p>Products that contain no confectionery</p> <p>Products that have no icing</p> <p>Muesli bars with an HSR of <math>\geq 3.5</math></p> <p>Portion sizes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scones, cake and dessert <math>\leq 100</math> g portion</li> <li>• loaf and muffins <math>\leq 100</math> g portion</li> <li>• slices <math>\leq 80</math> g portion</li> <li>• biscuits and pikelets <math>\leq 40</math> g portion</li> <li>• small pastries <math>\leq 60</math> g portion</li> <li>• pies and quiches <math>\leq 140</math> g portion</li> </ul>
Red	<p>Products that do not meet the amber criteria</p> <p>Sausage rolls</p> <p>Energy bars, protein bars and other muesli bars with an HSR <math>&lt; 3.5</math></p> <p>Sweet bakery items that contain confectionery</p> <p>Sweet bakery items with icing</p>

<sup>6</sup> 'Packaged snack foods' here refers to packaged foods not covered by other categories (eg, baked items).

## Drinks

Drinks	
Green	Plain, unflavoured water Reduced- or low-fat milk Unsweetened reduced- or low-fat plant-based milks (eg, soy, rice, almond, oat) with added calcium and vitamin B12
Amber	Plain, full-fat milk and plant-based milks (eg, soy, rice, almond, oat) with added calcium and vitamin B12
Red	Sugar-sweetened drinks <sup>7</sup> Artificially sweetened drinks Milk-based drinks with added sugar (eg, milkshakes) 100 percent fruit and/or vegetable juices, including those diluted with no added sugar, and unflavoured coconut water Energy drinks and sports drinks Flavoured waters

  

Smoothies (all varieties, including dairy and non-dairy)	
Green	
Amber	
Red	All smoothies

<sup>7</sup> 'Sugar-sweetened drinks' refers to any drink that contains added caloric sweetener, usually sugar. They include soft drinks/fizzy drinks, sachet mixes, fruit drinks, cordials, flavoured milk, flavoured water, cold tea and coffee and energy and sports drinks.

# Useful definitions

You can use the definitions below to help you interpret this Guidance.

## Processed foods

Any food that has been milled, cut, heated, cooked, canned, frozen, cured, dehydrated, mixed or packaged or that has undergone any other process that alters the food from its natural state. Processing may also involve adding other ingredients to the food.

## Whole foods

Foods that are close to their natural state but may have been harvested, washed or cleaned ready for eating or cooking. Examples of whole foods are fresh vegetables and fruit, raw legumes, raw nuts and seeds, and fresh eggs, fish, chicken and red meat (with visible fat removed).

## Less processed foods

Foods that have undergone some processing, but have kept most of their physical, chemical, sensory and nutritional properties. They are usually processed with the aim of making the food:

- safer – for example, pasteurised milk products
- healthier – for example, low-fat milk, which contains less energy (kilojoules) and less saturated fat than full-fat milk
- more convenient to use – for example:
  - wholegrains that have had their outer inedible husks removed but still have the edible parts of their structure
  - wholemeal flour
  - frozen, packaged vegetables and fruit that have been frozen quickly to keep their nutrient content
  - canned legumes, vegetables and fruit with no or minimal added sugar and/or salt.

## Highly processed foods

These foods, or the ingredients used to make them, are heavily processed so they are usually very different from their natural states. Highly processed, ready-to-eat foods tend to be low in naturally occurring nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, fibre and other phytonutrients. They are often high in refined grains, energy (kilojoules), and added saturated fat, sugar and/or salt (sodium).

## Refined grains

Refined grains have had most or all of the bran and germ removed, leaving only the endosperm. They provide more kilojoules but fewer nutrients and much less fibre than wholegrains. Some examples include white rice, white bread and white pasta.

# Source material

Commonwealth of Australia. 2019. Health Star Rating System. URL: [healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/How-to-use-health-stars](https://healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/How-to-use-health-stars) (accessed 30 September 2019).

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