

**DRAFT UPDATE TO NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR
SCHOOL FOOD
JANUARY 2020**

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SCHOOL LUNCHES

Food Group	Standards
Fruit and Vegetables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No fewer than three portions of fruit and vegetables must be available per child throughout the lunch service. 2. Of these, at least two portions should be vegetables or salad, and at least one portion should be fruit. 3. Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite main course dishes must contain 40g of vegetables per serving, in addition to two separate portions of vegetables or salad. 4. All schools must offer fruit every day, such as fresh fruit, fruit tinned in natural juice, or fruit salads. Tinned fruit in syrup and fruit syrups for salads must not be used due to the high sugar content. 5. Baked beans must not be served as a vegetable more than once a week in a primary school. 6. If beans or pulses form the protein part of a main course, another vegetable must be available.

Notes

- Fruit and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. It is recommended that we eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. At least three different fruits and three different vegetables should be on the menu each week.
- Fruit juice is not included in this group, but is dealt with under the drinks group.
- Dried fruit has a very high natural sugar content and can increase risk of dental caries if eaten regularly and not at a meal time.
- If vegetables in mayonnaise or dressing eg coleslaw are available, another vegetable or salad must be available.
- Pasta tinned in tomato sauce does not count as a vegetable.
- Unlike most vegetables, baked beans do not contain vitamin C.
- Serving a separate non pulse vegetable with pulse based vegetarian options provides variety for vegetarians and ensures that a mixture of nutrients is provided.
- It is recommended that for young children, grapes and similar small fruits or vegetables, such as cherry tomatoes, should be sliced lengthways to prevent choking.
- Choose tinned vegetables canned in water with no added salt or sugar.
- Choose tinned fruit canned in natural juice rather than syrup.

What is a portion of fruit and vegetables?

For adults, a portion of fruit or vegetables is 80g. Practically, a good guide is to serve at least half an adult portion (40g) to nursery pupils, moving towards an adult portion for primary and post-primary pupils. The table below gives examples of these portions.

	Pre-school One portion	Primary and Post-Primary One portion
Cooked vegetables	1–2tbsp	2–3 heaped tbsp
Salad vegetables	1/2 dessert bowl	1 dessert bowl
Medium sized piece of fruit eg apple orange, pear	1/2 –1 fruit	1 fruit
Fruit salad, fruit tinned in juice	1–2tbsp	2–3tbsp

Food Group	Standards
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every lunch service must contain at least one portion of food from this group. 2. Rice or pasta must be offered at least twice a week. In a single choice menu, rice or pasta must be served at least once a week. Rice or pasta should be wholegrain or a higher fibre version. 3. Bread must be available every day as a meal accompaniment in all schools, 50% of which should be wholegrain or higher fibre versions. 4. 50% of sandwiches available should be made with wholegrain or higher fibre versions of bread.

Notes

- Starchy carbohydrates are usually inexpensive and provide energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals.
- Potatoes include boiled, mashed, baked and dry-roasted with no fat.
- Wholegrain food contains more fibre than white or refined starchy food, and often more of the other nutrients.
- Bread is a healthy source of carbohydrates. Acceptable types of bread are: granary, wholemeal, wheaten, white, brown, high fibre white bread, rolls, home-made bread, bagels, pitta bread, chapattis made without fat, soda bread and potato bread.
- Higher fibre breads include wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, wheaten and granary options.
- Bread should be provided without spread, although this may be available at the servery.
- Bread is additional to, and not a replacement for, the main meal accompaniment, and it should be positioned at the end of the servery.
- Bread should always accompany soup, especially if offered on a single choice menu.
- Offering rice and pasta provides variety and encourages children to try different foods.
- Wholegrain or higher fibre versions of rice or pasta should be used in a composite dish.
- Pupils should be encouraged to try wholegrain or higher fibre versions of rice and pasta in non-composite dishes or offered a 50:50 mix of white to wholegrain.
- Other starchy carbohydrates include noodles, couscous, bulgar wheat, semolina, tapioca, maize, cornmeal, quinoa, and other grains (eg oats, millet, barley, buckwheat, rye, spelt).

Food Group	Standards
Dairy and alternatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every lunch service must contain at least one portion of food from this group. 2. In addition to standard 1, drinking milk must be available as an option every day. 3. Only lower fat milk must be available. Whole milk is permitted in nursery school. 4. A dairy-based dessert, in addition to milk and together with fruit, must be available every day. 5. Cheese must not be served as the only vegetarian option more than twice a week.

Notes

- Milk and milk products are excellent sources of several nutrients including calcium, which is important for good bone development, protein and vitamins.
- Milk is a good drink option. Semi-skimmed milk has the same amount of calcium as whole milk and is the preferred choice in primary and post-primary schools. Skimmed milk is not appropriate for children under five years.
- Examples of dairy-based desserts include lower fat, lower sugar yogurt such as natural or Greek yogurt, creamed rice, tapioca, custard, other milk-based puddings and cheese and crackers.
- Yogurts should not contain more than 11g sugar per 100g.
- Where a portion of cheese is served as the main protein item, it also counts as a portion of food from the 'Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins' section.
- Alternatives to cheese provide variety for vegetarians. Recommended alternatives include beans, pulses and lentils.
- In non-vegetarian dishes cheese can be used as a topping no more than twice a week.
- Any dairy alternatives used for special diet provision for example oat milk, should be unsweetened and fortified with calcium.

Food Group	Standards
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every lunch service must contain at least one portion of food from this group. 2. In nursery and primary schools, meals containing red meat must be served a minimum of twice a week and a maximum of three times a week. In post primary schools this must be a minimum of three times a week and a maximum of four times a week. 3. Processed red meat or meat or chicken products (such as bacon, cooked ham, gammon, sausages, hot dogs, chicken nuggets etc) should only be served at lunchtime, and may be served a maximum of once a week in primary schools, and a maximum of twice a week in post primary schools. 4. To allow choice for pupils on the days when processed red meat or meat or chicken products are available, schools should aim for 50% healthier alternatives which should be presented and marketed in a competitive way to other meal options and clearly stated on the menu. This standard also applies to single choice menus. 5. There must be at least three days each week in a primary and two days each week in a post primary without any processed red meats, meat or chicken products, fried and other high fat foods. 6. Fish must be available at least once a week in primary schools and at least twice a week in post primary schools. 7. Oily fish must be available at least once every four weeks.

Notes

- These foods are sources of protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Beans, peas and lentils (which are all types of pulses) are good alternatives to meat because they're naturally very low in fat, and they're high in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Pulses, or legumes as they are sometimes called, are edible seeds that grow in pods and include foods like lentils, chickpeas, beans and peas.
- Offering fish provides variety and offers foods that children might not otherwise get a chance to try. This would include sandwich and baguette fillings such as tuna and salmon.
- An oily fish is one containing omega 3 fatty acids which help maintain a healthy heart. This includes fresh, canned or frozen salmon, sardines, pilchards, mackerel and herring.
- Tuna, whether fresh, frozen or canned, can only be counted as a non-oily portion of fish.
- On a week when oily fish is provided this will meet the standard for fish for that week in primary schools. In post primary schools, fish will need to be offered once more that week.
- All fish, including where it is an ingredient in a composite dish, should be demonstrably sustainable.
- Red meat includes beef, pork and lamb and meals made from them.
- Red meat is a good source of iron.
- On days when red meat is being served at lunch, there can be more than one red meat meal choice as pupils will only choose one option.
- Some meats are not classed as red meats, but as processed red meat or meat products. Processed red meat and meat and chicken products include bacon, cooked ham, gammon, chorizo, salami, economy burgers, sausages, hot dogs, chicken nuggets.

- Post primaries should consider offering a non-processed red meat on one day out of the possible two days for processed red meat and meat or chicken products.
- Burgers are also classed as a meat product unless they contain at least 95% lean minced meat and then will be classed as red meat. Composite dishes made from mince containing less than 95% lean meat are classed as a meat product.
- Other vegetable-based sources of protein include tofu, bean curd and mycoprotein (Quorn™ products).

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Food Group	Standards
Oils and spreads	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooking oils must be unsaturated oils including vegetable oil, rapeseed oil, olive oil and sunflower oil. 2. Soft spreads must be made from unsaturated fats.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaturated fats are healthier fats that are usually from plant sources and in liquid form as oil, for example vegetable oil, rapeseed oil and olive oil. Swapping to unsaturated fats will help to reduce cholesterol in the blood; therefore it is important to get most of our fat from unsaturated oils. Choosing lower fat spreads, as opposed to butter, is a good way to reduce saturated fat intake. • Butter is not included in this food group due to the high saturated fat content. 	

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Foods to eat less often and in small amounts

Food Group	Standards
Fried and other high fat foods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fried and other high fat food products, such as chips, roast potatoes, other fried potatoes, products fried in the manufacturing process, garlic bread, fried fish or meal choices containing pastry, should only be served at lunchtime and may be served a maximum of once a week in a primary and a maximum of twice a week in a post primary. 2. In addition to standard 1, bread crumbed fillet of fish (oven baked) can be served once a week. 3. Processed red meat or meat or chicken products (such as bacon, cooked ham, gammon, sausages, hot dogs, chicken nuggets etc) should only be served at lunchtime, and may be served a maximum of once a week in primary schools, and a maximum of twice a week in post primary. 4. To allow choice for pupils on the days when processed red meats or meat or chicken products are available, schools should aim for 50% healthier alternatives, which should be presented and marketed in a competitive way to other meal options, and clearly stated on the menu. This standard also applies to single choice menus. 5. There must be at least three days each week in a primary and two days each week in a post primary without any processed red meats, meat or chicken products, fried or other high fat foods. 6. When a high fat starchy food such as chips or garlic bread is served, an alternative without added fat must be available. 7. In addition to fruit and a dairy product, a dessert (including pies, crumbles, cakes, biscuits and puddings) may be available twice a week, on a day when no fried or other high fat foods, processed red meats or meat or chicken products are offered. 8. If available, desserts such as pies, crumbles and other composite fruit dishes must contain a minimum 40g of fruit per serving. 9. The only savoury snacks available must be savoury crackers or breadsticks provided they are served with fruit or vegetables or cheese.
Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried or other high fat foods include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - any food that is deep-fried, either in the kitchen or in the manufacturing process, even flash fried foods or foods such as roast potatoes, chips, oven chips, potato waffles and potato shapes that have been brushed or sprayed with oil; - pre-prepared coated, battered and bread crumbed products such as chicken nuggets and fried fish; - foods containing pastry such as apple pie. • On days when processed red meat and meat and chicken products are being served at lunch, there can be more than one processed red meat or meat or chicken product choice as pupils will only choose one option. There should however be healthier alternatives available as per standard 4. 	

- Processed red meat and meat and chicken products include bacon, cooked ham, gammon, chorizo, salami, economy burgers, sausages, hot dogs, chicken nuggets.
- Whole muscle meat or chicken, which is dipped in egg, coated in home-made breadcrumbs without the addition of any fat or oil and dry baked does not count as a meat or chicken product.
- Meat products must:
 - meet the legal minimum meat content levels set out in the Products Containing Meat etc. Regulations (NI) 2014 as amended or updated from time to time. Products not specifically covered by these legal minimal requirements must meet the same minimum meat content levels prescribed for burgers;
 - not be 'economy burgers' as described in the Products Containing Meat etc. Regulations (NI) 2014;
 - contain none of the prohibited list of offal.
- Mayonnaise is very high in fat therefore low-fat mayonnaise should be used

Food Group	Standards
Salt and condiments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Salt must not be available to add to food. 2. Condiments (tomato sauce, brown sauce, mustard, salad cream, relishes etc) must not exceed 10ml or 10g per serving and may be served a maximum twice a week. Condiments must only be provided from the service counter and controlled by the kitchen staff.

Food Group	Standards
Confectionery and other sweet foods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confectionery, chocolate and chocolate coated products must not be available. 2. Desserts including cakes, biscuits and puddings must only be provided at lunch time and as part of a meal, and only available a maximum of twice a week.

Notes

- Confectionery, chocolate and chocolate coated products include:
 - bars of milk, plain or white chocolate; chocolate flakes, buttons, or chocolate-filled eggs;
 - chocolate coated bars;
 - biscuits containing or coated in chocolate (including those with a chocolate drizzle, partly and fully-coated biscuits such as chocolate digestives, chocolate covered caramel wafers, chocolate fingers, choc chip cookies);
 - sweets, eg boiled or chewy sweets, gum, liquorice, mint and other sweets, also sherbet, fudge, marshmallows, toffee and chewing-gum; this includes sugar-free sweets and sugar-free chewing-gum;
 - cereal chewy bars, cereal crunchy bars, cereal cake bars, processed fruit bars;
 - fresh or dried fruit that has been sugared or covered with a yogurt or chocolate coating;
 - choc ices and other chocolate coated ice-cream.

- Decoration of cakes and biscuits must be kept to a minimum. If used, an undecorated or healthier dessert should also be available.
- Cakes, biscuits and puddings, whether purchased or homemade should meet the Public Health England sugar reduction targets.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-achieving-the-20>

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Food Group	Standards
Drinks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The only drinks available in school must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plain water (still or sparkling); • lower fat milk. Whole milk is permitted in nursery school. • unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices (max 150ml); • combination drinks (containing no more than 150ml and no less than 45% fruit or vegetable content, in combination with plain water only and no added sugar) (Post Primary only); • milk and yogurt drinks (containing no added sugar, has total sugars content which does not exceed 5g/100ml, a total fat content of 1.8g/100ml, and a maximum portion size of 200ml); • tea and coffee (these drinks are not suitable for the nursery sector). 2. Fresh drinking water, i.e. tap water, must be provided free every day.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoothies made from 100% fruit and/or vegetables are permitted under unsweetened fruit/vegetable juice. • Fruit juice and fruit smoothies help towards fluid consumption, however they are also a source of free sugars* and consumption should be limited to no more than a combined total of 150ml per day. • Due to the free sugar content, unsweetened fruit juice, combination drinks, milk and yogurt drinks and smoothies should only be served at a main meal i.e. breakfast or lunch, in primaries. • Tea reduces the amount of iron absorbed from food. It is therefore advisable not to serve tea to young children whose intakes may be low due to small appetites. Tea and coffee also contain caffeine. Caffeinated drinks are not suitable for young children. • Any milk alternatives used for special diet provision for example oat milk, should be unsweetened and fortified with calcium. <p>* The definition of free sugars includes: all added sugars in any form; all sugars naturally present in fruit and vegetable juices, purées and pastes and similar products in which the structure has been broken down; all sugars in drinks (except for dairy-based drinks); and lactose and galactose added as ingredients. The sugars naturally present in milk and dairy products, fresh and most types of processed fruit and vegetables and in cereal grains, nuts and seeds are excluded from the definition.</p>	

NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR OTHER FOOD AND DRINKS IN SCHOOLS

The following standards apply to food sold or served in schools at break times, through vending machines, tuck shops, breakfast clubs and after school clubs and should be read in combination with the food-based lunch standards:

1. confectionery must not be sold in schools;
2. cakes and biscuits must not be sold in schools (except at lunchtime as part of the main meal, in line with nutritional standards for school lunches);
3. savoury snacks must not be sold in schools (except as specified in line with nutritional standards for school lunches for savoury crackers and cheese);
4. a variety of fruit and vegetables must be available in all school food outlets;
5. children and young people must have easy access at all times to free, fresh, preferably chilled water;
6. the only drinks available must be:
 - plain water (still or sparkling);
 - lower fat milk. Whole milk is permitted in pre-schools;
 - unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices or smoothies (max 150ml). In primary and pre-schools these should be served only once and at a main meal i.e. breakfast or lunch;
 - combination drinks (containing no more than 150ml and no less than 45% fruit or vegetable content, in combination with plain water only and no added sugar). These should only be available post primaries;
 - milk and yogurt drinks (containing no added sugar, has total sugars content which does not exceed 5g/100ml, a total fat content of 1.8g/100ml, and a maximum portion size of 200ml);
 - tea and coffee (these drinks are not suitable for the nursery sector).
 - Fresh drinking water, i.e. tap water, must be provided free every day.
7. cooking oils and soft spreads must be made from unsaturated oils and fats;
8. fried and high fat foods, processed red meat, and meat or chicken products must only be served at lunchtime;
9. salt must not be available to add to food;
10. sugar must not be available to add to food and drinks.