

Ontario's School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150)...what it means for parents

The what...P/PM 150:

- Includes nutrition standards (e.g. amounts of fat and sodium) to identify food and beverages as either: Sell Most, Sell Less or Not Permitted for Sale
- Applies to all food and beverages sold at school (e.g. catered lunches, tuck shops, fundraising, sporting events, etc.)
- Does not apply to food or beverages in packed lunches from home
- Is mandatory in September, 2011

The why...P/PM 150:

- Helps children practise what they learn about healthy eating in the classroom
- Teaches children to make healthy choices
- Supports children in their learning
- Shows children that the school cares about their health as well as their education

We appreciate your support as we make changes to the food and beverages we are providing at our school. By working together, families and schools can instil positive values in our children about the importance of nutrition throughout their lives.

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Creating a healthy catered lunch day

Starting September 2011, catered lunch providers will be offering foods that comply with the nutrition standards in the School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150). To help our school comply, there may be some changes to the foods offered over the next few months, including:

- More whole grain bread and other grain products
- More veggies and fruit
- Different or fewer desserts or sweet items
- Fewer items with minimum nutritional value (e.g. pasta with butter, pancakes, etc.)

Our school is excited about these changes! Students will be eating healthy foods to fuel their bodies and their minds! To make sure your child's lunch is a complete meal that contains the energy and nutrients they need, pack extra food (e.g. yogurt, fruit), a healthy snack (e.g. cheese cubes and crackers) and a healthy beverage (e.g. milk).

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Healthy pizza lunches...

...pizza day goes Hawaiian!

Next term, our pizza day menu is changing from pepperoni pizza to Hawaiian, plain cheese or veggie pizza on whole grain crust.

Why the change?

The Healthy Schools committee must only sell pizzas that meet the Ontario *School Food and Beverage Policy* (P/PM 150) from the Ministry of Education (www.Ontario.ca/healthyschools).

The committee chose a healthy pizza made with whole grain crust, lower fat cheese and vegetable toppings! Our student samplers agree that these new pizzas taste great!

We hope that you will continue to support this important school fundraiser. By working together, we can instil positive values in our children about the importance of nutrition...and raise money for many school activities!

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Remember to pack extra food and a healthy drink on pizza day. A healthy lunch includes at least three of the four food groups from Canada's Food Guide. Adding milk and/or yogurt, fruit and/or vegetables (e.g. fresh fruit, veggie sticks or a fruit cup), completes your child's lunch and provides them with the energy to learn, play and grow.

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Healthy vending machines...school vending machines have a new look!

Vending machines can be a great place for students on the run to grab a quick snack or drink. With the Ministry of Education School Food and Beverage Standards (P/PM 150), the vending machines in our school have had an overhaul!

More healthy choices are now available than ever before (80% to be exact) in both beverage and snack vending machines.

Having healthy choices in our vending machines shows our commitment to making the healthy choice the easy choice for students at our school. Encourage your children to try the new, healthier options.

And don't forget to ask what they think!

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Healthy classroom rewards

Rewards or “treats” are often used to recognize children for success in the classroom and at home. It’s quick and easy but rewarding children with food, healthy or unhealthy:

- Confuses children by contradicting classroom healthy eating lessons
- Discourages positive attitudes towards healthy eating habits
- Harms children’s dental health
- Teaches children to eat even when they are not hungry
- Reinforces eating outside of meal or snack times
- Promotes a preference for sweet food over healthy plain foods (e.g. plain milk, carrot sticks, unsweetened cereal, etc.)

The Ministry of Education’s School Food and Beverage Policy recommends not using food or beverages as rewards or incentives. Instead, try the suggestions below when at home or school:

- Non-food items (e.g. stickers, pencils, bookmarks, balls, hacky sacks, etc.)
- Privileges (e.g. being a helper, extra recess or playtime)
- Recognition (e.g. certificates for special accomplishments or taking the time to say “great job!”)

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Have a healthy classroom celebration!

Classroom events can be fun, exciting...and healthy! For your child's next classroom celebration, help to make the healthy choice the easy choice—send a nutritious treat for everyone to enjoy!

Try one of these healthy menu ideas for classroom celebrations:

- Fresh fruit kabobs with vanilla yogurt for dipping
- Whole grain crackers and lower-fat cheese cubes
- Air popped popcorn and fresh fruit
- Whole grain muffins and fresh orange wedges
- Fresh vegetable stick skeleton with “brain” dip

Providing healthy snacks not only supports the Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150), but also reinforces the classroom healthy eating lessons and encourages nutrient rich, dentally friendly fun!

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Healthy refreshments for school meetings and events

Family barbeques, school council meetings, holiday concerts and fairs...schools host many meeting and events! Offering healthy choices at these events supports a healthy school nutrition environment.

Why not bring a tasty and nutritious snack or beverage to the next school meeting or event?

Many school community members try to eat well. Others may have to eat healthy to control blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol or weight. All will appreciate and benefit from healthy food and beverage options.

For the next school meeting or event try:

- Fresh fruit platter with vanilla yogurt for dipping
- Whole grain crackers, lower-fat cheese cubes and grapes
- Air popped popcorn and fresh fruit
- Whole grain muffins and mandarin oranges
- Fresh vegetable platter with hummus or other low-fat dip

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Safe and pleasant eating areas...Do you know where your kids eat?

We all have a role to play in helping our children develop healthy eating habits. At our school, we focus on safe, pleasant eating areas where everyone can enjoy eating their lunch. If you have ideas on how to help improve the lunchroom, or can volunteer during the lunch hour, please contact our School Nutrition Action Committee.

Why not try the same at home? Turn off the TV and enjoy a family meal tonight.

Families that regularly sit down together for meals are healthier and happier than those who don't. For greater success, parents and children can work together to plan the meals, shop for ingredients and prepare recipes.

Remember to include foods from each of the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide in packed lunches and at the dinner table. Enjoy the time eating together as a family!

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School milk programs

Did you know that half of children between the ages of six and 12 years do not get any milk products at lunch?

Research shows that children who don't have milk at lunch are unlikely to meet their daily calcium needs. To help more students drink milk and get the calcium, protein, and vitamins A and D they need to grow and develop strong bones, our school is offering a school milk program.

By signing your child up for our school milk program, they will get one of the required two cups of milk or fortified soy beverage per day as recommended by Canada's Food Guide. It also helps students practice what they learn in the classroom about healthy eating and Canada's Food Guide. Sign your child up today!

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Positive role modelling

Fostering a healthy body image is important for your children to feel good about themselves. A healthy body image leads to higher self-esteem and often to making healthier and more positive life choices. You can help your child have a positive body image by:

Be a positive role model. Our actions and words can influence a child's self-image. Be aware of the messages you send about your body and the comments you make about the appearance of others. Also, if you eat well, your child will too.

Banish teasing. Let children know that judging people about their weight or looks is unacceptable. Teach kids to treat others with respect. Children come in different shapes and sizes.

Talk about their insides, not their outsides. Encourage kids to focus on their abilities rather than their appearance. Help them to focus on things they are good at and things they like about themselves.

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Hand washing

Children share many items throughout the school day and at home including: books, puzzles, computers, water bottles and sports equipment. During the cold and flu season, this sharing can spread germs that can cause sickness. Correct hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.

To help keep the people in your home healthy, take these steps:

- Encourage children to sneeze into the bend of their arm rather than into their hands
- Make time for hand washing, especially before eating
- Always have soap, paper or hand towels within easy reach
- Remind children (and adults) to wash their hands:
 - Before eating, preparing food or visiting someone who is sick
 - After using the bathroom, blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing, handling garbage, touching animals, playing outdoors or visiting someone who is sick
 - When they look or feel dirty

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It's Time to Eat! Appropriate scheduling of meals and breaks

Children need time to eat regularly during the school day to help them learn, eat healthy, be active and feel good. The Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy (PPM 150) states that schools should try to create healthy environments.

Our school is trying new ideas to support and reinforce healthy eating lessons and scheduling of nutrition breaks.

Student Nutrition Program (Breakfast Club or Snack Program)

Amazing school volunteers prepare and serve healthy foods each day to our students. Long bus rides, early mornings and skipping breakfast leave children hungry. With a Student Nutrition Program, they love to eat healthy foods at school with their friends!

In-class snacking

Classroom teachers have worked with students to develop guidelines about snacking and drinking throughout the school day. The main rules? Healthy choices and no crunching during teaching time! Ask your child for more information.

Water in class

We encourage students to bring reusable water bottles that can be kept at their desks. Drinking water throughout the day can help with concentration at school. We want to support thinking!

Watch future newsletters for more healthy eating tips!

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Recess before lunch

Some classes have outdoor playtime before eating. We've found that this is a great way to ensure that students have active time outside as well as eat their healthy foods from home.

Balanced school day

Our school uses a balanced school day schedule that allows students two, 40-minute nutrition breaks each day. 20 minutes are spent eating a nutritious mini-meal sent from home and the other 20 minutes is spent outside. We find the balanced school day is a great way to have longer blocks of teaching times and students like the extra eating and playing time.

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