

From the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Health Check™ Dietitians



Heart&Stroke

HEALTHY EATING CHOICES

FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Includes a helpful
MEAL PLANNER
and **HEALTHY TIPS**



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Healthy Eating Habits for Children – it's all about balance

Healthy food choices are important for your children's overall health. Like most parents, you are trying to juggle many things at once. Convincing your children to eat healthy foods every day is only one of them.

Healthy eating is about balance. It's making smart decisions to help your children eat healthy most of the time. The Heart and Stroke Foundation has created this booklet of simple tips and tools for busy parents. Use it to plan your meals and make healthy choices with your children.

A healthy and balanced diet will give your children the energy to be active all day, every day.

Children form habits at an early age. If your children see that healthy eating and physical activity are priorities in your life, they are also likely to live a lifetime of good health. We hope you enjoy this booklet and encourage you to keep it handy for everyone to use.

Mealtime Tips

- **Plan meals around the four Food Groups** (Grains, Meat and Alternatives, Vegetables and Fruit and Milk Products).
- **Involve your children in meal preparation** so they feel included and learn about healthy food.
- **Teach your children how to read food labels.** Soon they'll be choosing healthier options.
- **Prepare simple meals;** children like them best. A grilled cheese sandwich with cut-up vegetables and dip and fresh fruit can be a healthy meal.
- **Offer a variety of foods.** Over time your children will be willing to try new foods.
- **Be a good role model** by practising healthy eating habits at home and at restaurants.
- **Turn the TV off** so everyone can enjoy eating together.
- Visit www.heartandstroke.ca and www.healthcheck.org for more information on healthy living and great healthy recipes.

Energy In – Energy Out!

As children move through various stages of physical growth, regular physical activity and healthy eating habits are critical. Help your children to find the right balance between the energy they take in from food and drink and the energy they use to grow and be active. If you eat a balanced diet (energy in) and exercise regularly (energy out), not only will you feel healthier, chances are your children will too.



Daily physical activity helps children maintain a healthy weight, build endurance and strength, and improve their performance at school.

School-aged children should build up to at least 90 minutes of daily physical activity. But that doesn't necessarily mean participating in organized sports. Running, walking the dog, swimming, biking, playing outdoors and dancing all count.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation encourages families to follow a lower-fat diet with a variety of foods from the four Food Groups and to include vegetables, fruit and whole grains at each meal.

Activity Tips

- **Create an activity chart.** Have family members list activities and check off those completed at the end of the day. Reward with a family outing on the weekend.
- **Balance organized sports with free play** such as playing tag, skipping rope or throwing a Frisbee.
- **Plan a family bike ride** or hike with a healthy picnic lunch.
- **Organize a "walking school bus"** with neighbours to walk children to and from school.
- **Keep homemade snacks handy,** such as frozen fruit juice pops, muffins and trail mix.
- **Participate as a family in Foundation events** that celebrate and encourage physical activity. Visit www.heartandstroke.ca for details and great ideas on physical activity.



Weekly Meal Planning – the first step to nutritious meals every day

Meal planning is one of the most important steps on the road to enjoying nutritious food.



Just think of how stressful last-minute meals are when you haven't planned dinner. The Foundation suggests that you plan your meals for the week to save time and help you meet your family's nutritional needs.

Meal Planning Tips

- **Keep a shopping list in the kitchen.** Visit www.healthcheck.org for a printable list.
- **Set aside one day when you can write down your week's meal plan.** Plan your meals and snacks around the four Food Groups and make sure to include enough food to meet everyone's nutritional needs.
- **Plan for quick meals** for those nights when there are after-school or evening activities.
- **Let teenagers make one meal a week.** They are more likely to eat what they have helped to prepare. Suggest ideas such as soups, sandwiches, simple casseroles or pizzas made with pita and their favourite toppings.
- **Consider planning 2 to 3 weeks** of menus that you can repeat.
- **Make an extra batch** of your favourite soup or pasta for the freezer so you can defrost, heat and serve.
- **To help determine a serving size**, use an adult hand as a guide. Here are some tips:
 - 1/2 to 1 palm of your hand = serving of chicken, fish or beef (50 g to 100 g)
 - 2 thumbs = serving of hard cheese (50 g)
 - fist = serving of salad (1 cup/250 mL)
 - thumb tip = serving of margarine (1 tsp/5 mL)

Preparing Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks – children like to help and learn!

Your children can learn a lot by being involved in preparing meals and snacks. *When they contribute, children feel special and can learn healthy habits for life.* It's a perfect time to talk about the four Food Groups, healthy options and portion sizes.

Breakfast, Lunch and Snack Tips



Breakfast

- **Serve a balanced breakfast** to help control your children's appetite for the day and boost their blood sugar level so they can be active and attentive. People who eat breakfast tend to have a healthier weight.
- **Choose foods from at least three Food Groups:** Grains, Vegetables and Fruit, Meat and Alternatives and Milk Products.
- **Avoid foods that are high in fat** and calories such as doughnuts.
- **Dedicate a shelf in the cupboard** and refrigerator for nutritious options that children can reach.



Lunch

- **Pack a lunch.** Meals made at home tend to be healthier than store-bought options.
- **Keep portions small** and easy to eat for younger children.
- **Use a thermos** for leftover pasta or soup.
- **Add in a dip** for cut-up vegetables and fruit.
- **Vary the outside layer of your children's favourite sandwich** by using pita, bagels, tortilla wraps, whole wheat bread or mini-sub.
- **Bake a batch of muffins or oatmeal cookies**, freeze and have ready to go.
- **Pack some water** or 100% fruit juice.
- **Inquire about a school milk program.**



Snacks

- **Have healthy snacks available** such as vegetables and fruit, whole wheat crackers and breads and lower-fat cheese.
- **Make your own trail mix** from the bulk food section. Include nuts, seeds and whole grain cereals.
- **Keep 100% fruit juice on hand.** Children can make their own freezer fruit juice pops for a healthier treat with less sugar.



Eating from the four Food Groups for Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks.

It's as easy as 2, 3, 4!

Enjoying foods from the four Food Groups is important for a healthy and balanced diet – especially for children! When it comes to breakfast, lunch and snacks, variety is the key. Cut and post the Mix-and-Match table in the kitchen.

2 = 2 Food Groups at snack

3 = 3 Food Groups at breakfast

4 = 4 Food Groups at lunch and dinner*

Visit www.hc-sc.gc.ca for a copy of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.

Examples



Breakfast

Choose foods from at least **3 Food Groups**

Example: 1 Grain Product (slice of whole wheat toast)
1 from Meat and Alternatives (egg)
1 from Vegetables and Fruit (a banana or orange)



Lunch

Choose foods from at least **4 Food Groups**

Example: 1 Grain Product (pita bread)
1 from Meat and Alternatives (tuna or salmon)
1 from Vegetables (sliced red pepper) and Fruit (apple)
1 Milk Product (cheese or a glass of milk)



Snacks

Choose foods from **2 Food Groups**

Example: 1 Grain Product (one serving of baked tortilla chips)
1 from Vegetables (carrot sticks) and Fruit (100% fruit juice)

* Use the same Mix-and-Match options to prepare dinners.

You can find recipe ideas at www.healthcheck.org and www.heartandstroke.ca.

Have your kids Mix-and-Match their selections. Just remember the 2, 3, 4 rule!

| Food Groups | Grain Products Look for Whole Grain | Meat and Alternatives Look for Lean Meats (10% fat or less) | Vegetables and Fruit Look for orange and dark green vegetables and fruit | Milk Products Look for lower-fat milk or yogurt (2% M.F. or less) | Other Foods For added taste and other beverages |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| Breakfast Pick from 3-4 Food Groups | cereal | egg | fresh fruit such as orange, banana | cheese (20% M.F. or less) | soft margarine |
| | bread | | frozen fruit such as blueberries | yogurt | |
| | pancakes | peanut butter | 100% fruit juice | milk or soy beverage | |
| | English muffin, crumpet or bagel | | dried fruit such as raisins | cottage cheese | |
| Lunch Pick from 4 Food Groups | pita | tuna | vegetables such as baby carrots, broccoli, red pepper, grape tomatoes | milk or soy beverage – plain or flavoured | salad dressing as a dip |
| | bread | egg | | | |
| | tortilla | salmon | fresh fruit such as kiwi, apple, grapes, melon | yogurt - container, tube or drink | mustard/ketchup |
| | bagel or bun | sliced meat | | | |
| | naan bread | sliced meat | dried fruit | water | |
| | English muffin | chili | salad | yogurt - container, tube or drink | mustard/ketchup |
| | pasta | baked beans | applesauce | | |
| | rice | baked beans | fruit cup | cheese (20% M.F. or less) | salsa |
| | crackers | lentil soup | 100% fruit juice | | |
| | muffins | hummus | vegetable cocktail | cottage cheese | |
| Snacks Pick from 2 Food Groups | crackers | nuts | fruit juice pops | yogurt - container, tube or drink | dip - yogurt or salad dressing |
| | pita | hummus | cut-up vegetables | milk or soy beverage | salsa |
| | bread sticks | dry roasted soy beans | fresh fruit | | |
| | cereal | | dried fruit and dried fruit snacks | cheese (20% M.F. or less) | water |



Navigating the Grocery Store

Have you noticed the growing amount of nutrition information in your grocery store?

With thousands of products in the average store, choosing healthy foods may seem difficult.

Here are a few things you can do to make your next trip a little easier.



Check for Health Check™

Shopping for Healthy Food Tips

- **Have a meal plan with a shopping list.** This will help you avoid impulse decisions and high fat, high salt temptations.
- **Look for the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Health Check™ symbol** on food packages. It's a quick way to let you know a product is a healthy choice. Each product has been checked for the level of fat, sodium, fibre or other important nutrients by the Foundation's dietitians. Visit www.healthcheck.org for more information on healthy eating.
- **Don't go shopping when you're hungry.** You'll be tempted to buy more than you need.
- **Mentally divide up your cart**, filling the largest part with vegetables and fruit and whole grains, the next largest section with lower-fat dairy products and lean meat and meat alternatives.
- **Spend the maximum amount of time** in the produce, bread, meat and dairy aisles.
- **Look for time savers** like bagged salads, ready-to-eat dips and bagged baby carrots.
- **Read the Nutrition Facts table.** Choose products lower in saturated and trans fats and lower in total fat and sodium. Aim for products higher in fibre and important nutrients such as calcium and iron.
- **Stock up on these healthy staples:** lower-fat dairy products (skim, 1% or 2% milk or yogurt and part skim cheeses), whole grain cereals and breads, whole wheat pasta and brown rice, fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit, leaner meats and alternatives (sliced turkey, baked beans, lean ground beef).