

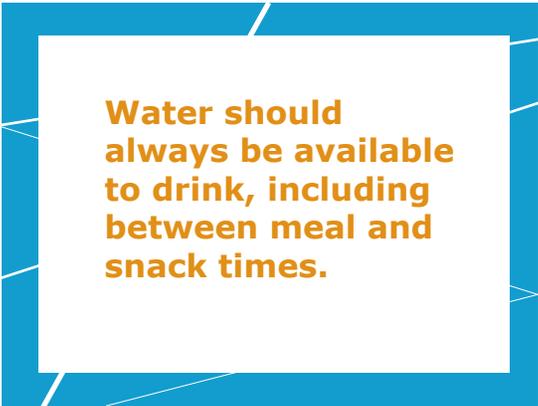
## SECTION 3: FOOD AND BEVERAGE CHOICES

Young children need healthy foods and beverages to support their growth and development, and well-being. Canada's Food Guide defines a healthy eating pattern that includes nutrient needs and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. From one year of age, young children can be offered a variety of foods that generally follow Canada's Food Guide.

The eating pattern in Canada's Food Guide includes foods from the four food groups: **Vegetables and Fruit**, **Grain Products**, **Milk and Alternatives** and **Meat and Alternatives**, plus a small amount of added oils and fats.

Canada's Food Guide also provides additional guidance on how to choose healthy foods and beverages. These recommendations include the following:

- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable or fruit each day.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Offer skim, 1% or 2% milk to children older than two years of age.
- Choose foods from each food group prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.
- Offer water regularly to satisfy thirst. Offer more water in hot weather and when children are very active.



**Water should always be available to drink, including between meal and snack times.**

## A. Food and Beverage Choices Tables

The *Food and Beverage Choices Tables* are found on the following pages. Foods are categorized based on their overall nutritional value. Table 2 presents foods and beverages to be served most often, Table 3 illustrates those to be served sometimes and Table 4 outlines foods and beverages that should not be served at all.

**Note:** Brand names of food and beverage products are not provided in the tables as ingredients often change without notice. Including brand names may also be misinterpreted as product or brand endorsement.

Always read food labels to check for whole grains, sugar and salt/sodium content as well as possible allergens. To learn more about reading labels, please refer to *Section 6: Reading Food Labels*.

**Note:** Food and beverage choices in the tables below do not address special dietary requirements that parents may request.

### Legend:

 Fish that contain higher levels of mercury. For more information, visit Health Canada's [Mercury In Fish](#) webpage.

 Foods that are choking hazards. Do not serve these foods to children under four years of age.

 Foods that may contain bacteria which can cause food poisoning.

**Table 2: Serve Most Often Food and Beverage Choices**

**Serve Most Often**

These food and beverage choices are from Canada’s Food Guide and naturally contain, or are prepared with, little or no added fat, sugar or salt/sodium.

Offer these foods and beverages at most meals and snacks.

Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh vegetables and fruits</li> <li>• Frozen vegetables and fruit with no added sugar, sodium or sauce</li> <li>• Unsweetened fruit sauce or fruit blends</li> <li>• Canned fruit in juice, drained</li> <li>• Canned vegetables, rinsed and drained</li> <li>• Potatoes, boiled, baked or mashed</li> <li>• Canned tomatoes (140 mg or less of sodium per reference amount)</li> <li>• Tomato sauce made on-site using Serve Most Often ingredients</li> <li>• Tomato sauce (140 mg or less of sodium per reference amount)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Whole grain, whole wheat or bran is first on ingredient list; AND,</li> <li>✓ sugar 8 g or less per 30 g serving; AND,</li> <li>✓ sodium 240 mg or less per 30 g serving; AND,</li> <li>✓ the food does not contain any <b>Do Not Serve</b> ingredients.</li> </ul> <p><b>Grain-Based Snacks and Baked Goods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some whole grain or bran muffins, loaves</li> <li>• Some oatmeal cookies</li> <li>• Some granola or cereal-type bars</li> <li>• Popcorn (air popped, unsalted, unflavoured) </li> <li>• Some rice cakes</li> <li>• Some whole grain crackers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain whole 3.25% M.F. cow’s milk or whole milk powder for children between 9 months and 2 years of age</li> <li>• Plain skim, 1%, 2% M.F. cow’s milk for children over 2 years of age</li> <li>• Skim milk or partly-skimmed milk powder for children over 2 years of age</li> <li>• Canned, evaporated milk (2% M.F. or non-fat, used in cooking and baking)</li> <li>• Buttermilk, used in cooking and baking</li> <li>• Unsweetened, fortified soy beverages, for children over 2 years of age</li> <li>• Plain and flavoured yogurt, soy yogurt and kefir (greater than 2% M.F. for children 2 years and under)</li> <li>• Yogurt tubes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meat and Fish</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain chicken, turkey, lamb, lean beef, pork</li> <li>• Extra lean and lean ground meat and poultry (e.g., beef, turkey, chicken, pork, lamb)</li> <li>• Traditional meats and wild game from federally inspected sources</li> <li>• Fresh, frozen, or canned fish low in mercury (e.g., cod, sole, haddock, salmon, tilapia, trout, canned light tuna, whitefish)</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Serve Most Often Food and Beverage Choices Continued**

Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
<p><b>Dark green vegetables include:</b> asparagus, green beans, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, edamame, fiddleheads, endive, kale/collards, leeks, lettuce (romaine), mesclun mix, mustard greens, okra, peas, green peppers, seaweed, snow peas, spinach, Swiss chard, zucchini</p> <p><b>Orange vegetables and fruit include:</b> carrots, pumpkin, squash, sweet potatoes, yams, apricots, cantaloupe, mangoes, nectarines, papaya, peaches</p>	<p><b>Bread, Pasta, Rice and Cereals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole grain or 100% whole wheat breads, buns, bagels, rolls, English muffins, pitas tortilla, flatbreads, roti, naan bannock</li> <li>• Whole grain or 100% whole wheat pizza crust or dough</li> <li>• Whole grain or 100% whole wheat pancakes or waffle</li> <li>• Whole grains (e.g., quinoa, oats, bulgur, buckwheat, couscous, corn, cornmeal)</li> <li>• Brown rice, wild rice</li> <li>• Whole grain or 100% whole wheat pasta</li> <li>• Polenta</li> <li>• Plain oatmeal</li> <li>• Some breakfast cereals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard and soft, non-processed, pasteurized cheese: cheddar, mozzarella, brick, Monterey Jack, Havarti, Gouda, Swiss, feta, ricotta, cottage cheese, string cheese, cheese curds</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meat Alternatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grated eggs</li> <li>• Plain liquid egg product</li> <li>• Nut, legume and seed butters, including peanut, almond, walnut, sesame, sunflower, pea and soy butters</li> <li>• Whole nuts and seeds (plain, unsalted) <del>0-4</del></li> <li>• Chopped/finely ground nut and seeds (plain, unsalted)</li> <li>• Cooked lentils, chickpeas or dried beans</li> <li>• Canned beans, lentils, chickpeas, drained and rinsed</li> <li>• Hummus</li> <li>• Tofu, tempeh, plain textured vegetable protein</li> <li>• Veggie burgers and veggie meatballs made on-site</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Serve Sometimes Food and Beverage Choices**

**Serve Sometimes**

These food and beverage choices tend to have higher amounts of added fat, sugar, or salt/sodium compared to foods and beverages in the Serve Most Often category.

Offer these foods and beverages three times per week or less.

Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canned or jarred tomato sauces</li> <li>• Canned tomatoes (more than 140 mg of sodium per reference amount)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Whole grain, whole wheat or bran is not the first on ingredient list; AND,</li> <li>✓ sugar 8 g or less per 30 g serving; AND,</li> <li>✓ sodium 240 mg or less per 30 g serving; AND,</li> <li>✓ the food does not contain any <b>Do Not Serve</b> ingredients.</li> </ul> <p><b>Grain-Based Snacks and Baked Goods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some granola or cereal-type bars</li> <li>• Some cookies, quick breads, muffins, scones and biscuits</li> <li>• Some crackers</li> </ul> <p><b>Bread, Pasta, Rice and Cereals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enriched flour or multigrain bread, bagel, buns, rolls, English muffins, pita, tortillas, flatbreads roti, naan, bannock</li> <li>• Some flavoured breads and bagels</li> <li>• Plain white pizza crust or dough</li> <li>• Plain white rice (converted, parboiled), instant rice</li> <li>• Plain white pasta</li> <li>• Rice noodles</li> <li>• Some breakfast cereals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drinkable yogurt</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meat and Fish</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frozen prepared meatballs (store-bought)</li> </ul> <p><b>Meat Alternatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imitation ground meat</li> <li>• Prepared veggie burgers and meatballs (store-bought)</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Do Not Serve Food And Beverage Choices**

**Do Not Serve**

These foods and beverages contain few or no essential nutrients, or contain a lot of added salt/sodium, sugar or unhealthy fats. Some are choking hazards or not recommended for food safety concerns.

Do not offer these foods and beverages.

Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice</li> <li>• Sweetened fruit juice</li> <li>• Unpasteurized juice </li> <li>• or cider</li> <li>• Canned fruit in juice not drained</li> <li>• Canned fruit in light or heavy syrup</li> <li>• Canned fruit containing artificial sweeteners</li> <li>• Pre-packaged vegetables or fruit in sauce</li> <li>• Sweetened fruit sauce or fruit blends</li> <li>• Dried fruit (unless  used in baking or as part of a recipe)</li> <li>• Vegetable and fruit chips (e.g., potato, carrot, banana)</li> <li>• Pre-packaged potato products (e.g., French fries, hash browns)</li> <li>• Battered vegetables or fruit</li> <li>• Deep fried or par-fried vegetables or fruit (e.g., fried zucchini)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Whole grain, whole wheat or bran is not first on ingredient list; AND,</li> <li>✓ sugar more than 8 g per 30 g serving OR;</li> <li>✓ sodium more than 240 mg per 30 g serving OR;</li> <li>✓ the food contains <b>Do Not Serve</b> ingredients.</li> </ul> <p><b>Grain-Based Snacks and Baked Goods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some cookies, squares</li> <li>• Baked goods with chocolate, caramel or candy pieces</li> <li>• Dipped granola or cereal-type bars</li> <li>• Bagged or microwaveable flavoured popcorn</li> <li>• Any popcorn for children under 4 years of age </li> <li>• Some crackers</li> <li>• Pretzels</li> <li>• Tortilla/corn chips and chip-like snack food</li> <li>• Seasoned mini rice cakes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skim, 1%, 2% M.F. cow’s milk to children under 2 years of age</li> <li>• Flavoured skim, 1%, 2% M.F. milk (e.g., chocolate, strawberry, vanilla)</li> <li>• Flavoured, fortified soy beverage</li> <li>• Milkshakes</li> <li>• Eggnog</li> <li>• Hot chocolate</li> <li>• Homemade, instant or pre-packaged puddings</li> <li>• Unpasteurized milk and milk products </li> <li>• Soy beverage for children under 2 years of age</li> <li>• Plant-based beverages (e.g., coconut, rice, almond, cashew, hemp, potato)</li> <li>• Yogurt with any <b>Do Not Serve</b> ingredients or artificial sweeteners</li> <li>• Fat-free yogurt is not recommended for any children</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meat and Fish</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw or undercooked meat or poultry, seafood or shellfish </li> <li>• Store-bought breaded or battered fried chicken, other meat or fish</li> <li>• Frozen, prepared hamburger patties</li> <li>• Deli meats (e.g., bologna, salami, macaroni and cheese loaf, summer sausage, deli roast beef, turkey and chicken)</li> <li>• Ham, fresh or canned</li> <li>• Prepared/cured meats (e.g., hot dogs, sausages, pepperoni sticks) </li> <li>• Bacon, bacon bits</li> <li>• Wings, ribs</li> <li>• Rotisserie-style chicken (store-bought)</li> <li>• Frozen and prepared meat pies</li> <li>• Fresh, frozen or canned fish high in mercury (e.g., canned albacore tuna) </li> </ul>

**Table 4: Do Not Serve Food And Beverage Choices Continued**

**Do Not Serve**

These foods and beverages contain few or no essential nutrients, or contain a lot of added salt/sodium, sugar or unhealthy fats. Some are choking hazards or not recommended for food safety concerns.

Do not offer these foods and beverages.

Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jellied desserts that contain fruit</li> <li>Fruit snacks (e.g., gummies, fruit rolls, fruit leather) including those made with juice or fruit purée</li> <li>Store-bought deli salads </li> <li>Raw sprouts (e.g., alfalfa sprouts, bean sprouts, clover, radish and mung beans) </li> </ul>	<p><b>Bread, Pasta, Rice and Cereals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some flavoured breads and bagels</li> <li>Iced or sugar-coated breads</li> <li>Flavoured, pre-packaged grains, rice, pasta (e.g., garlic, herb, chicken, vegetable)</li> <li>Flavoured oatmeal</li> <li>Some breakfast cereals including those with chocolate, candies, marshmallows or sugar-coated pieces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iced dairy desserts (e.g., ice cream, ice cream bars, ice cream cakes and ice cream sandwiches, frozen yogurt)</li> <li>Unpasteurized cheese </li> <li>Processed cheese products (e.g., cheese slices, cheese spread)</li> <li>Fat-free cheese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smoked fish </li> <li>Fish with bones </li> <li>Cured fish</li> </ul> <p><b>Meat Alternatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flavoured liquid egg product</li> <li>Unpasteurized egg products </li> <li>Raw or lightly cooked eggs</li> <li>Nut, legume or seed butters that have added flavours or coatings (e.g., chocolate, honey, berry)</li> <li>Whole nuts or seeds larger than sesame seeds (cooked, raw or as an ingredient) </li> <li>Chunky peanut or nut butter </li> <li>Canned baked beans with pork, molasses or maple syrup</li> <li>Canned baked beans in tomato sauce</li> <li>Breaded and fried meat alternatives</li> <li>Frozen and prepared tacos/burritos</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Do Not Serve Food And Beverage Choices Continued**

**Other Foods**

These foods and beverages contain few or no essential nutrients, or contain a lot of added salt/sodium, sugar or unhealthy fats. Some are choking hazards or not recommended for food safety concerns.

Do not offer these foods and beverages.

<p><b>Beverages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy drinks or sports drinks</li> <li>• Protein drinks</li> <li>• Caffeinated drinks</li> <li>• Fruit-flavoured drinks (e.g., fruit beverages, punches, cocktails)</li> <li>• Flavoured, mineral, carbonated or fortified waters</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cough drops </li> <li>• Snacks using toothpicks or skewers </li> <li>• Honey to children under one year </li> </ul>	<p><b>Other Food:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cakes, cupcakes</li> <li>• Candy (e.g., yogurt-covered candy, gummies, licorice) </li> <li>• Chocolate bars (including energy and protein bars)</li> <li>• Chocolate chips, cocoa nibs</li> <li>• Coconut and palm oils</li> <li>• Cotton candy</li> <li>• Frozen treats (e.g., freezies, ice pops, slushies, frozen juice snacks)</li> <li>• Glazes and icing</li> <li>• Gum </li> <li>• Hard margarines</li> <li>• Jelly desserts</li> <li>• Lard or shortening</li> <li>• Marshmallows </li> <li>• Pre-packaged toddler meals</li> <li>• Simulated meat strips, imitation (soy) bacon bits</li> <li>• Sweetened spreads (e.g., caramel, cinnamon, chocolate, chocolate-nut)</li> <li>• Toaster pastries, pies, pastries, croissants, donuts</li> <li>• Vegetarian wieners, sausages, bacon</li> </ul>
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