

Menu Analysis and Recommendations for Lakeshore Community Childcare Centre – Fall and Winter 2021-2022 Menus

October 29, 2021

This review will compare the menus to the 2019 Canada's Food Guide.

Overall, snacks and lunches included in the four-week Fall and Winter Menu are nutritious, well-balanced and promote variety. All snacks contain one to three food groups in a minimally processed form, and most snacks include at least one option of fruit or vegetable. Most lunches include a choice of protein, a choice of grain product, and two choices of vegetables and fruit. This ensures that the children get sufficient energy as well as enough vitamins, minerals and fibre.

The children are provided two snacks per day which are varied throughout the week. Most of the food and beverage choices appear to naturally contain, or are prepared with, little added fat, sugar and salt. Based on previous recommendations, snacks such as Goldfish crackers and tortilla chips should continue to be offered only occasionally, if at all, due to higher amounts of added fat and salt. Similarly, sweet items such as baked goods with chocolate chips, cheese cake, angel food cake and red velvet bars should be limited or not offered. Other baked goods in the four-week menus appear to be homemade and using whole grains, which ensure that they still contain some nutrients. If including homemade baked goods on the menus, offer these items three times per week or less.

All three food groups are well represented at lunches, with plenty of variation. The children are exposed to a wide selection of fruits and vegetables at every lunch, which are served fresh or are prepared using healthy cooking methods such as roasting and stir-frying. Vegetables and fruit, along with regular offering of whole grains, ensure an adequate intake of fibre, vitamins and minerals. Different types of protein foods are offered at each lunch to provide children with protein and other nutrients like iron. Lean poultry, cooked fish, beans and peas are healthier choices to keep offering. Milk is offered daily, which will help the children get their daily recommended calcium intake. Offering whole milk for toddlers up to age two years and lower fat milks for older children follows Health Canada's recommendations.

The four-week Fall and Winter menus at Lakeshore Community Childcare Centre are nutritionally balanced, promote variety, and provide sufficient nutrients and calories for children aged one to six, and up. Appropriate substitutions are available for children with food restrictions or vegetarian eating. The menus also do not restrict children on the amount of food they can eat. This is important as allowing children to regulate their quantity of food and respond to their hunger and fullness cues is a crucial part of the division of responsibility around mealtimes. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any concerns regarding these menus.

Other guidelines that may apply:

- Continue to offer at least one choice of vegetable or fruit at each snack and two choices at each lunch
- Continue choosing 100% whole grain products for at least half of the grain products each day
- Choose whole grain or 100% whole wheat pastas and brown or wild rice instead of white more often
- Choose vegetables and fruit grown in Ontario to support local, when possible
- Choose fruit jams that contain no added sugar
- Continue to offer a variety of vegetables and fruit each day as colourful meals are more appealing to children. Colourful foods such as dark green and orange vegetables and fruit indicate the presence of vitamins, minerals, and other compounds beneficial to health
- Continue to offer a variety of protein options, including protein foods that come from plants. Plant-based protein foods can provide more fibre and have less saturated fat than other types of protein foods
- Continue to offer alternatives in consideration of food allergies and food restrictions due to cultural and religious beliefs (e.g. vegetarian options, egg-free options, dairy-free options, alternatives for pork)
- Continue to promote and support diversity by including dishes that reflect various cultures and traditions
- Continue to offer alternatives for foods that are choking hazards for children under four years of age (e.g. popcorn)
- Continue to offer processed snack foods (e.g. Goldfish crackers, tortilla chips) less often
- Continue to limit sweet foods (e.g. baked goods with chocolate chips, cheese cake, angel food cake and red velvet bars) offered
- If offering homemade baked goods, ensure that they are made with whole grain flours and offer them three times per week or less, preferably a maximum of once per week
- If offering condiments, sauces and dips, use limited amounts (1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon) and serve them on the side when possible
- Continue to offer water regularly to satisfy thirst, including in-between meals and snack times

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