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NEW NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES AND OTHER FOOD IN SCHOOLS

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NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

Food group	Standards
<p>Group 1: Bread, other cereals and potatoes.</p> <p>This group contains bread, potatoes, rice, pasta, noodles and cereals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every school lunch must contain a portion or portions of food from this group. • Rice and pasta must be offered at least once a week. In a single choice menu, rice or pasta must be served at least once a week. • Bread should be available on a daily basis. • Also see additional requirements on fried foods – see Group 5a.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starchy foods are usually inexpensive and provide energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals. • Offering rice and pasta provides variety and encourages children to try foods they might not get the chance to try at home. • Bread is a healthy source of carbohydrates. • Nearly all types of bread are acceptable: white, brown, wholemeal, granary, high-fibre white, pitta, rolls, sliced bread, homemade bread, chapattis made without fat. • Bread should be provided without spread, which should be freely available. 	

Food group	Standards
<p data-bbox="236 275 419 376">Group 2: Fruits and vegetables.</p> <p data-bbox="236 421 451 678">This group includes fresh, frozen, canned and dried varieties and fruit juices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 275 1289 376">• Not less than two portions of fruit and vegetables should be available per day per child throughout the lunch service. <li data-bbox="483 421 1289 521">• Of this, at least one portion should be vegetables or salad and at least one portion should be fruit (fresh, tinned in juice, fruit salad, fruit juice or dried fruit). <li data-bbox="483 566 1305 645">• Pies, crumbles and other composite fruit dishes must contain at least one portion of fruit per serving. <li data-bbox="483 678 1289 824">• Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite main course dishes must contain a minimum of half a portion of vegetables per serving, in addition to a separate serving of vegetables or salad. <li data-bbox="483 869 1321 1014">• Baked beans must not be served as a vegetable more than once a week in a primary school. Baked beans must not be the only vegetable option on any day in a post-primary school. <li data-bbox="483 1059 1359 1126">• If beans or pulses form the protein part of a main course, another vegetable must be available.
<p data-bbox="236 1171 331 1205">Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="236 1238 1313 1350">• Fruit and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. It is recommended that we eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Information about portion sizes is included below. <li data-bbox="236 1395 1201 1429">• Spaghetti tinned in tomato sauce does not count as a vegetable. <li data-bbox="236 1462 1177 1496">• Unlike most vegetables, baked beans do not contain vitamin C. <li data-bbox="236 1541 1273 1608">• Serving a separate, non-pulse vegetable with pulse-based vegetarian options provides variety for vegetarians. 	

What is a portion?

For adults, a portion of fruit or vegetables is 80g, but there are no recommendations for children. Practically we suggest a good guide would be to serve at least half an adult portion, (ie 40g) to nursery pupils, moving towards an adult portion (ie 80g) for primary/post-primary pupils. The table below gives examples of how these portions translate into kitchen servings.

	Nursery	Primary/Post-Primary
	One portion	One portion
Cooked vegetables	1-2 tablespoons (tbsp)	2-3 tablespoons (tbsp)
Salad vegetables	½ dessert bowl	1 dessert bowl
Fresh fruit	½ -1 fruit	1 fruit
Fruit salad, fruit tinned in juice	1-2 tablespoons (tbsp)	2-3 tablespoons (tbsp)
Fruit juice	150ml	150ml
Dried fruit	½ -1 tablespoon (tbsp)	1 tablespoon (tbsp)

Food Group	Standards
<p data-bbox="236 271 459 376">Group 3: Milk and milk products.</p> <p data-bbox="236 421 459 633">This group includes cheese, yogurt and milk puddings.</p>	<ul data-bbox="483 271 1340 611" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="483 271 1340 342">• Every school lunch must contain a portion or portions of food from this group. <li data-bbox="483 387 1340 423">• Drinking milk must be available as an option every day. <li data-bbox="483 468 1340 530">• Cheese must not be served as the only vegetarian option more than twice a week. <li data-bbox="483 575 1340 611">• Cheese may be used as a topping more frequently.
<p data-bbox="236 687 331 723">Notes</p> <ul data-bbox="236 768 1340 1272" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="236 768 1340 869">• Milk and milk products are excellent sources of several nutrients including calcium, which is important for good bone development, protein and vitamins. <li data-bbox="236 913 1340 1014">• Milk, plain or flavoured, is a good drink option. Semi-skimmed milk has the same amount of calcium as whole milk. Skimmed milk is not appropriate for children under five years. <li data-bbox="236 1059 1340 1126">• Alternatives to cheese provide variety for vegetarians. Recommended alternatives include beans, pulses and lentils. <li data-bbox="236 1171 1340 1272">• Where a portion of cheese is served as the main protein item, it also counts as a portion of food from the meat, fish and alternative sources of protein food group. 	

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 4: Meat, fish and alternatives.</p> <p>This group includes beef, pork, lamb, chicken, fish, eggs, pulses, eg peas, beans, lentils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every school lunch must contain a portion or portions of food from this group. • Meals containing red meat must be served: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a minimum of twice a week and a maximum of three times a week in nursery and primary schools; and ○ a minimum of three times a week and a maximum of four times a week in post-primary schools. • Fish should be available at least once a week in primary schools and at least twice a week in post-primary schools. • Oily fish should be available at least once every three weeks. • Meat products (such as burgers, sausages, sausage rolls etc) may be served a maximum of once a week in primary schools. In post-primary schools there should be at least three days on which these products are not available. On the days they are available sufficient healthy options should also be provided to allow a choice for pupils.

Notes

- Meat, fish and alternatives such as eggs, beans and pulses are a major source of protein.
- Red meat is a good source of iron.
- Red meat includes beef, pork and lamb and meals made from them.
- Sausages are not classed as red meat. Burgers are not classed as red meat unless they are home-made with at least 95% **lean** meat.
- Limit the fat content of lunches by not offering too many foods from this group which have added fat, eg pastry toppings on pies or battered coating on fish.
- 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.
- Oily fish contains omega 3 fatty acids which help maintain a healthy heart.

- Tuna only counts as an oily fish when it is fresh or frozen because the omega 3 fatty acids are removed during the canning process. However, canned tuna can be counted as one of the non-oily portions of fish.
- Meat products must:
 - Meet the legal minimum meat content levels set out in the Meat Products Regulations (NI) 2004 as amended or updated from time to time. Products not specifically covered by these legal minimal must meet the same minimum meat content levels prescribed for burgers;
 - Are not “economy burgers” as described in the Meat Products Regulations (NI) 2004; and
 - Contain none of the prohibited list of offal.

Food group	Standards
<p>Group 5a: Fried and other high fat foods.</p> <p>This group includes cooking fats and oils, oily salad dressings, mayonnaise, salad cream, crisps, cream, pastry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep-fried foods or other high fat products, such as chips, roast potatoes, other fried potatoes or garlic bread, must not be offered, in total, more than twice a week. • There should be at least 2 days each week without any fried foods, foods cooked in batter, or foods containing pastry, for example fish in batter, sausage rolls, vol-au-vents, quiche, apple pie, fruit fritters etc. • When a starchy food that is cooked in fat or oil is served, a non-fried alternative must be available. • Low fat desserts must be available on days when chips and high fat foods are offered. • The only savoury snacks available should be nuts and seeds with no added salt or sugar. Savoury crackers or breadsticks can only be served with fruit or vegetables or a dairy food as part of the school lunch.
<p>Notes</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Deep-fried or other high fat foods’ includes any food that is deep-fried, either in the kitchen or in the manufacturing process, eg chips, oven chips, potato waffles, pre-prepared coated, battered and breaded products, eg chicken nuggets, fish fingers, potato shapes, battered onion rings and doughnuts. • Limiting fried options helps to limit the fat content of lunches. • Schools should work towards limiting all fried or high fat foods to twice a week. • Offering non-fried options when fried or high fat options are on the menu helps to ensure that a variety of other starchy foods are provided. • Offering low fat desserts on days that fried or high fat foods are on offer limits the fat content of lunches. • Be aware of nut allergies. It will be for individual schools to decide on whether or not to provide nuts. 	

Food group	Standards
Group 5b: Confectionery and Other Sweet Foods: Sugar, Sweet pastry, Chocolate, Sweets, Sweetened Soft Drinks, Puddings, Cakes, Biscuits, Jam, Jelly, Ice-cream.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confectionery, chocolate and chocolate-coated products should not be available throughout the lunchtime. • Cakes and biscuits can only be provided at lunchtime and as part of a meal. • Cakes, biscuits and puddings made with cocoa powder should only be available a maximum of 2 days per week.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confectionery includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chocolate and chocolate products, for example: 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, for example: boiled, chewy, gum, liquorice, mint and other sweets, also sherbet, fudge, marshmallows, toffee and chewing-gum; this includes sugar-free sweets and chewing-gum. ○ Cereal chewy bars, cereal crunchy bars, processed fruit bars and sugared, dried and yoghurt or chocolate-coated fruit. ○ Choc ices and other chocolate coated ice-cream. <p>NB This does not include cocoa powder used in cakes, puddings, biscuits or low calorie drinking chocolate or combination drinks made with yoghurt or dairy equivalents.</p>	

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Drinks

The only drinks available should be:

- plain water (still or sparkling)
- milk
- pure fruit juices
- yoghurt or milk drinks (with less than 5% added sugar)
- drinks made from combinations of the above (eg smoothies)
- low calorie hot chocolate } these drinks are
- tea } not suitable for
- coffee } the nursery sector

NB: Artificial sweeteners should be used only in yoghurt and milk drinks; or combinations containing yoghurt or milk.

Combination drinks must contain at least 50% of the milk, yoghurt or fruit juice as appropriate.

Low calorie hot chocolate is defined as 20 calories per 100 millilitres.

Drinking water, ie tap water, must be provided free every day.

Salt and Condiments

Table salt should not be available within nursery or primary schools. It should not be on view in the post-primary school dining room but may be made available on request from the service counter.

Condiments (tomato ketchup, brown sauce, salad cream, relishes etc) should only be provided from the service counter and should be controlled by the kitchen staff.

STANDARDS FOR FOOD OTHER THAN LUNCH IN SCHOOLS

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

- (i) no confectionery should be sold in schools;
- (ii) no savoury snacks other than nuts* and seeds (without added salt or sugar) should be sold in schools;
- (iii) a variety of fruit and vegetables should be available in all school food outlets. This could include fresh, dried, frozen, tinned and juiced products;
- (iv) children and young people must have easy access at all times to free, fresh, preferably chilled, water in schools so that children do not have to depend on going to the lavatory to get water;
- (v) the only other drinks available should be bottled water (still or sparkling), milk, pure fruit juices, yoghurt and milk drinks (with less than 5% added sugar) or drinks made from combinations of these, eg smoothies, low calorie hot chocolate, tea and coffee. Artificial sweeteners should only be used in yoghurt and milk drinks. Combination drinks must contain at least 50% of the milk, yoghurt or fruit juice as appropriate. Low calorie hot chocolate is defined as 20 calories per 100 millilitres.

* Be aware of nut allergies. It will be for individual schools to decide on whether or not to provide nuts.

INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

Until April 2008, there will be some flexibility with regard to the nutritional standards. The following concessions may be applied:

- Oily fish may be served once every six weeks in a single choice menu working towards once every three weeks.
- In post-primary schools there must be two days on which meat products (such as burgers, sausages, sausage rolls etc) are not available at lunch time. On the days they are available sufficient healthy options should also be provided to allow a choice for pupils.
- In addition to the allowance for high fat/fried foods fish may be offered as a fried option **a maximum of once a week** until April 2008.
- As an interim measure towards removing all chocolate items, a small drizzle of chocolate may be added to, for example, plain oatmeal biscuits until April 2008.
- Salt may be on view in the post-primary school dining room until April 2008.
- Food served at break time should work towards the standards by April 2008.