



Canadian
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The new Canada Food Guide

Canada's Food Guide has helped Canadians make healthy food choices for 65 years. Health Canada has been working for the past three years to provide a revised version of this important resource. Comments from dietitians, physicians, scientists and experts in public health have been obtained to give the population a Food Guide based on the latest scientific advances in terms of nutrition and disease prevention.

The new Food Guide provides Canadians with recommendations on the type and the amount of food an individual should consume every day according to age and sex. It also includes advice on physical activity needed for health.

What are the major differences between the 1992 Food Guide and the new Food Guide? While it is still a rainbow, the first thing that strikes the eye is that the 'Vegetables and Fruit' group is now at the outer part of the rainbow to reflect the importance of vegetables and fruits as part of a healthy eating pattern.

The 1992 Food Guide gave general information concerning the number of servings from each food group, stating that Canadians should consume five to 12 portions of grain products, five to 10 portions of vegetables and fruits, and two to three portions of meat and alternatives per day. It gave age-specific recommendations only for milk products. The new Food Guide gives recommendations on the number of servings according to age group, and now includes information on the number of servings required by children two to three years of age. For teenagers and adults, the recommendations are now gender specific.

The new version of the Food Guide also gives the consumer advice on the types of food to choose. It is stated that one dark green and one orange vegetable should be consumed every day, and that vegetables and fruits should be consumed more often than juice and should be prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt. At least 50% of the grain products consumed each day should be whole grain. The milk products food group is now called 'Milk and Alternatives' and has been modified to include fortified soy beverages. The consumer is advised to consume two cups of milk to ensure adequate vitamin D intake and to choose low-fat milk and lower fat milk alternatives. The 'Meat and Alternatives' group has also been modified: the serving size

is now 75 g of meat instead of 50 g to 100 g, there is more emphasis on meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu, and it is now recommended to consume two Food Guide servings of fish per week. In every food group, examples of a typical portion are illustrated, and these examples now include a variety of food that reflects the ethnic diversity in Canada.

Several new sections have been added, notably a section on advice for children of different ages and growth stages, which has specific nutritional advice concerning children's need for healthy growth and development; advice on folic acid, iron and calories for women who could become pregnant, who are already pregnant or who are breastfeeding; and advice on vitamin D supplementation for men and women older than 50 years of age. A section about fat encourages consumers to limit their intake of saturated and trans fat and to include a small amount of unsaturated fat to their daily diet. The Food Guide also provides advice on the types of foods and beverages to limit, along with recommendations on physical activity for both adults and children, and a section devoted to food labels encouraging the consumer to read labels and to choose products with less fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and sodium.

The new Food Guide has been greatly improved to provide the Canadian consumer with a product that is easier to adapt to the different age groups and sexes, and gives better information on serving size. The new document is bigger than the previous one-page version, but is easier to read and contains much more information to help the consumer make healthy choices.

The new Food Guide is an important and useful tool for Canadian families. It has been revised to help Canadians meet their vitamin, mineral and other nutrient needs and to reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Healthy eating habits are acquired at a young age. As paediatricians, we should be aware that this tool is available, be familiar with its content, and promote it to our patients and their parents to ensure a healthy generation.

Health Canada has published a separate document for educators and communicators (<www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/educ-comm/index_e.html>), with helpful information on the recommendations

Practice Point

contained in the new version of Canada's Food Guide. For more detailed information on the methods used to develop the Food Guide, paediatricians may be interested in an article to be published in the spring 2007 edition of the *Nutrition Reviews* journal. Canadian consumers can also

visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide (English) or www.santecanada.gc.ca/guidealimentaire (French); this site provides useful information and interactive tools to help consumers make healthy food and activity choices.

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The recommendations in this statement do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or procedure to be followed. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate. *Internet addresses are current at time of publication.*