

Choosing Healthy Foods in Canada

There are a lot of choices to make when buying food. The information given here is to help you choose healthy foods when grocery shopping.

Where should I shop?

The grocery store or supermarket is the best place to find healthy foods.

What foods should I buy?

Healthy foods can be grouped into four food groups:

Vegetables and Fruit

- Includes foods like carrots, bell peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, mushrooms, broccoli, cauliflower, apples, oranges, and bananas
- Fresh, frozen or canned are all good choices
- Canned vegetables - look for labels with “low sodium” or “no added salt”
- Canned fruits - look for those packed in water or fruit juice, not syrup



Grain Products

- Includes foods like rice, oats, pasta, bread, pita, roti, cereals
- Choose whole grain products more often
- Look for “whole grain _____” on the ingredient list
- “multigrain” or brown products are not always whole grain



Milk and Alternatives

- Includes foods like milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages
- Choose low fat products, such as skim, 1% or 2% milk, and low fat yogurt



Meat and Alternatives

- Meat includes foods like beef, lamb, fish, pork, chicken, goat, turkey, and wild game
- Avoid processed meats, such as deli meat
- Meat Alternatives includes foods like peas, beans, lentils, eggs, tofu, nuts, and nut butters



There are other foods in the grocery store. These are less healthy and should not be eaten every day.

What drinks should I buy?

There are two groups of drinks: choose and avoid. Water is the best choice, and is safe to drink from the tap in Canada. The more sugar added to a drink, the less healthy it is.

| Choose | Avoid |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Skim, 1% or 2% milk • Coffee and tea • Plain fortified soy beverages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop • Energy and sports drinks • Specialty coffees • Alcohol • Fruit drinks, punches, beverages, and ‘aides’ |

How can I tell if foods are healthy or not?

Foods such as fresh vegetables, fruit, and meat, as well as bulk grain products, are healthy choices that do not have labels. For other foods, the best way to tell if it is healthy is to use the Nutrition Facts table and ingredient list. Most pre-packaged foods have these tools on the label.

Nutrition Facts table

- Serving size: compare serving size to the amount you would eat
- Amount of calories: amount of energy from food
- Nutrients and amounts: useful for comparing foods
- % Daily Value: less than 5% is a little, more than 15% is a lot
- Want less than 5% of fat and sodium
- Want more than 15% of fibre, vitamins, and minerals

| Nutrition Facts | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Per 125 mL (87 g) | |
| Amount | % Daily Value |
| Calories 80 | |
| Fat 0.5 g | 1 % |
| Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g | 0 % |
| Cholesterol 0 mg | |
| Sodium 0 mg | 0 % |
| Carbohydrate 18 g | 6 % |
| Fibre 2 g | 8 % |
| Sugars 2 g | |
| Protein 3 g | |
| Vitamin A 2 % | Vitamin C 10 % |
| Calcium 0 % | Iron 2 % |

Ingredient list

- Ingredients at the beginning make up more of the food

How do I know how much to eat?

The healthy plate model is an easy tool that can help you to eat the right amounts of food. Make half of the plate Vegetables and Fruit, one quarter of the plate Grain Products, one quarter of the plate Meat and Alternatives, and have Milk and Alternatives on the side.

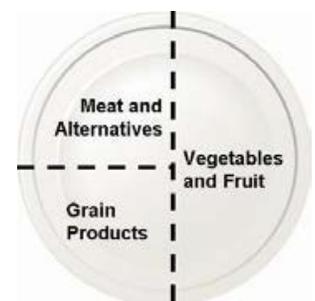
How can I save money?

There are many ways to spend less money when buying food.

- Buy store brands
- Buy from bulk bins
- Shop top and bottom shelves
- Look for quick sale foods
- Use coupons

What if I don't have enough money for food?

- The Food Bank is a source of food for people who may not have enough
- Food hamper is free seven times a year
- Food Bank needs to ask some questions first
- Foods in hamper meet Canada's Food Guide for one week



For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call health Link at 811.

Source: Nutrition Services, Alberta Health Services