

Food and drink categories – information for principals

The School nutrition and healthy eating policy and guidelines¹ have been developed to ensure all students have access to healthy foods and drinks and a consistent approach to the availability and sale of food and drinks in Northern Territory Government schools.

Why full fat dairy products are in the **amber - select carefully** category and not the **green - always on the menu** category

Full fat dairy products are a rich source of protein, calcium, vitamin A and some B vitamins. However, they are relatively high in saturated fat. The Australian dietary guidelines, NHMRC 2013a, recommends children 2 years of age and older choose reduced fat varieties of dairy foods where possible. Reduced fat dairy products provide similar quantities of calcium, protein and vitamins to the full fat versions, but they contribute far less saturated fat. Therefore, reduced fat dairy products should be promoted as a healthier alternative to full fat dairy products.

Why fruit juice is categorised as **amber - select carefully** and not **green - always on the menu**

Fruit juice contains some valuable nutrients; however, it is much lower in dietary fibre than fresh fruit. Drinking fruit juice in large amounts can contribute to excess energy being consumed. The Australian guide to healthy eating, NHMRC 2013b, recommends choosing fruit more often than juice because it is higher in fibre. Therefore, fresh, canned, in natural juice, and frozen whole fruit should be promoted as a healthier alternative to juice.

Why dried fruit is categorised as **amber - select carefully** and not **green - always on the menu**

Dried fruit is a good source of carbohydrates and dietary fibre and adds variety to the diet. However, if eaten in large amounts dried fruit can easily contribute to excess energy being consumed. The Australian guide to healthy eating, NHMRC 2013b, recommends that no more than one serve of dried fruit be eaten each day. Fresh, canned, in natural juice, and frozen whole fruit should be promoted as a healthier alternative to dried fruit.

Dried fruit sticks to the teeth and promotes tooth decay. The Australian Dental Association recommends dried fruit be eaten as part of a meal, not as a between meal snack.

Use of frozen or canned fruit and vegetables

- choose in season, locally grown fresh produce for the best flavour and value for money
- if it is not possible to choose in season, locally grown fresh produce, choose frozen or canned vegetables and fruit as a convenient alternative

¹ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/school-nutrition-and-healthy-eating>

- choose canned or frozen vegetables without added salt and added flavourings
- select fruit canned in natural juice.

Serving homemade fruit jelly cups

Adding fruit to jelly that is made from a packet could be seen as **greening** the product; however, packet jelly is a **red** food so cannot be served. If the jelly is home made using at least 99% fruit juice that has no added sugar and the serve size is less than 200 ml, then a fruit jelly cup will meet the criteria for **amber**.

Jelly recipe:

1. warm 500 ml of clear juice, for example apple in a saucepan
2. whisk in 10 g of unflavoured gelatine and simmer for 2 minutes as it dissolves
3. remove from heat then add 2 tbs of honey or maple syrup
4. pour jelly over fruit pieces in small containers, 200 ml max and chill until set
5. do not use fresh pineapple, kiwi fruit or papaya as the jelly will not set, tinned pineapple is fine.

Canteen vouchers used as a reward, even though the policy states that food or drinks are not to be used as a classroom reward

It is not uncommon for children to be given food as a reward for doing something well. This practice can have negative consequences including putting high energy foods on a pedestal, undermining health promotion messages and nutrition education given at school, contributing to poor health such as dental caries and obesity, as rewarded foods are often high in fat and sugar, and teaching children to eat when they are not hungry.

Research shows that when children eat nutritious foods, they perform better at school and learn more effectively (Kleinman et al 2002). Praise and positive reinforcement are the preferred methods for encouraging students to keep up their good work however, a canteen voucher may be used as a reward as this will allow students to access healthy food choices at appropriate times for eating.

How to deal with a student with a severe nut allergy

This is up to the nut policy at the individual school. Some schools have a nut ban because it is deemed dangerous to highly allergic children. Others, where there are children with mild allergies, may just ask the school to identify nut containing products at the school.

The policy also affects remote schools

Remote schools are also affected and must implement the policy; however, in most remote community schools, a School Nutrition Project (SNP) is operational. The SNP is funded through the National Indigenous Australian's agency and uses the same nutrition criteria as the School nutrition and healthy eating policy and guidelines to ensure that healthy breakfasts and lunches are provided to students.

Outdoor education survival camps and the policy

Where children are participating in long multiple day hikes, obviously high energy foods are necessary and as such the policy is not relevant.

The meaning of student centred fundraising

Student centred fundraising is fundraising that is run through the school or involves the students, such as chocolate drives, cake stalls and sausage sizzles. If a fundraiser involves only the parents, for example a quiz night, then it does not fall under the policy.

References

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013a) Australian Dietary Guidelines, Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council. NHMRC 2013a

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013b) Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council. NHMRC 2013b

Kleinman R, Hall S, Green H, Korzec- Ramirez D, Patton K, Pagano M, Murphy J, (2002) 'Diet breakfast and academic performance in children', *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*, Vol 46 (Suppl 1) pp 24–30.
Kleinman et al 2002