

School Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy and Guidelines

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Why are full-fat dairy products in the **AMBER SELECT CAREFULLY category and not the **GREEN ALWAYS ON THE MENU** category?**

A 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.

Q Why is fruit juice categorised as **AMBER SELECT CAREFULLY and not **GREEN ALWAYS ON THE MENU**?**

A 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.

Q Why is dried fruit categorised as **AMBER SELECT CAREFULLY and not **GREEN ALWAYS ON THE MENU**?**

A 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.

Q Is it okay to use frozen or canned fruit and vegetables?

A Choose in-season, locally grown produce, for the best flavour and value for money. If this isn't possible, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit can be a convenient alternative. Choose canned or frozen vegetables without added salt and added flavourings. Select fruit canned in natural juice.

Q Can we serve home made fruit jelly cups?

- A Adding fruit to jelly that is made from a packet could be seen as **GREEN**ing 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 200mL, then a fruit jelly cup will meet the criteria for **AMBER**.

Jelly recipe: warm 500mL of clear juice (e.g. apple) in a saucepan. Whisk in 10g of unflavoured gelatine and simmer for 2 minutes as it dissolves. Remove from heat then add 2tbs of honey or maple syrup. Pour jelly over fruit pieces in small containers (200mL max.) and chill until set. Don't use fresh pineapple, kiwi fruit or papaya as the jelly will not set. Tinned pineapple is fine.

Q Can canteen vouchers be used as a reward, even though the policy states that 'Food or drinks are not to be used as a classroom reward'?

- A 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.

Q We have a student with a severe nut allergy – how should we deal with that?

- A 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.

Q Does this policy also affect remote schools?

- A Yes. Remote schools must implement the policy however in most remote community schools, a School Nutrition Project (SNP) is operational. The SNP is funded through the Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and uses the same nutrition criteria as this policy to ensure that healthy breakfasts and lunches are provided to students.

Q What about *Outdoor Education Survival Camps*?

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

Q What is meant by ‘Student Centred Fundraising’?

This means 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 (ie 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.

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

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.