

Nurturing Healthy Eaters in Secondary Schools



Parents & Caregivers

have a variety of food available to pack.

School

decides when and where students eat.

Students

pack a variety of food and decide how much to eat.

Provide a Positive Eating Environment

- Provide eating environments around the school that encourage students to eat together and use mealtimes as a time to connect.
- Have casual conversation with students. Save nutrition education for the classroom instead of at mealtimes (for example, when eating together in a family studies class).
- Encourage students to limit screen time to be mindful of their eating habits.

Respect Natural Hunger & Fullness Cues

- Allow students to control their own intake and avoid pressuring students to eat a particular food.
- Avoid talking about dieting, restricting food intake or specifying portion sizes.
- Remind students that they are still growing and that they need to eat enough to support their activity and growth.
- Trust and respect students when they say or signal they are full or still hungry.

Build Trust with Students & Families

- Respect that many factors influence what foods students eat and that students have different health needs.
- Avoid commenting or making judgements about students' food choices.
- Refer families to appropriate community resources and reliable nutrition information such as Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000), Unlockfood.ca and Canada.ca/FoodGuide.

Healthy eating is more than the food you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat.

Canada's Food Guide

The information in this article is based on Ellyn Satter's principles and guidelines (www.ellynsatterinstitute.org).

Adapted with permission from the Manitoba School Nutrition Action Group

Teach Nutrition in a Positive Way

- Focus on the benefits of fuelling the mind and body with a variety of food.
- Keep all messages positive. Avoid negative/fear-based statements like "that food is not healthy."
- Remind students that healthy eating is an overall pattern over time; no one food or meal defines our eating habits.
- Create practical opportunities to learn about, see, smell, touch, grow, cook, and try a variety of food.
- Focus on behaviours such as regular meals and snacks, sleep, and physical activity to feel good, not for weight control or appearance.
- Avoid weighing students, using weight tables or charts, or calorie counting activities.
- When using food in classroom lessons or school activities, choose foods from Canada's Food Guide.
- Avoid using any food as a reward.

Promote Positive Body Image

- Be mindful of what you say and avoid sharing personal views about food, dieting and body weight.
- Teach about natural body diversity. Each person's body is different, and we should respect, accept and celebrate these differences!
- Teach students how to look at media messages and stereotypes critically. There is no 'ideal' body and all bodies are worthy.

Eating Should Be Enjoyable



Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
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Visit BrightBites.ca for more information on school nutrition

BH18152201852