



# Paint WITH VEGETABLES AND FRUIT your plate

**A TOOLKIT FOR  
ONTARIO CHILD CARE  
PROVIDERS**



# Acknowledgements

This toolkit was written by members of the Child Care Working Group (CCWG), a working group of the Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH). ODPH is the official voice of public health nutrition professionals in Ontario and represents registered dietitians working in the 35 public health units across the province.



**For more information, visit our website at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)  
or contact us at [odph.ca/contact-us](http://odph.ca/contact-us)**

**Contributing CCWG members include:**

<b>Laura Abbasi</b>	RD, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
<b>Erica Diamond</b>	RD, Peterborough Public Health
<b>Carolyn Froats-Emond</b>	RD, Renfrew County and District Health Unit
<b>Marketa Graham</b>	RD, Ottawa Public Health
<b>Rebecca Hanemaayer</b>	RD, formerly of Timiskaming Health Unit
<b>Dana Hawthorne</b>	RD, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit
<b>Elizabeth Higgins</b>	RD, Huron County Health Unit
<b>Anneke Hobson</b>	RD, Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Health Unit
<b>Eva Loewenberger</b>	RD, Region of Peel - Public Health

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Recipe consultation and development	Elaine McCarthy, Community Worker/Chef, Peterborough Public Health
Recipe testing	Child care staff in Peterborough City and County
Review and copy edit	Janice Dyer, Certified Professional Editor
Translation support	Ottawa Public Health and Healthy Kids Community Challenge Ottawa
French translation review	Anne Bouillon, RD, Ottawa Public Health
Design and layout	P-Dominique Plante, <a href="http://pdplante.com">pdplante.com</a>

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# Toolkit Purpose

This toolkit was developed for child care settings in Ontario to support the implementation of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15). This toolkit complements the *Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide*, available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources). Refer to the Practical Guide for detailed guidance on menu planning, meal and snack patterns, and portion sizes of vegetables and fruit to offer at meals and snacks.

The goal of this toolkit is to make it easier for young children to enjoy vegetables and fruit every day. *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* recommends that children ages 2 to 5 years consume four to five servings of fruit and

vegetables each day. The majority of Canadian children do not meet these guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

Many children consume most of their food in a child care setting. As a result, child care settings are an ideal place to encourage an increased intake of vegetables and fruit. Many elements of this toolkit could be used or modified for other early learning environments and programs.

The term “child care provider” is used as a generic term throughout the toolkit. The term is meant to reflect the variety of staff working in child care settings, including supervisors, early childhood educators, cooks, and others who provide daily care to children. The term “child care centre” reflects a range of child care settings.

## How to Use this Toolkit

**This toolkit contains the following sections:**

### BACKGROUND

Learn about the Paint Your Plate approach and understand the key messages about vegetables and fruit, including their benefits for young children. Learn ways to help children develop positive eating behaviours using the **How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years**<sup>2</sup> framework.

### RESPONSIVE FEEDING PRACTICES

How children are fed is just as important as what they are fed. Learn how to make mealtimes enjoyable by supporting children to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are satisfied.

### SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Make the healthy choice the easy choice! Create a physical and social environment that supports healthy eating and promotes vegetables and fruit throughout the year.

### POLICIES

Sum up your centre's healthy eating beliefs in a food charter that will guide healthy eating practices. Use sample policy examples to develop healthy food and nutrition policies for your setting.

### MENU PLANNING AND RECIPES

Use the menu planning tips, seasonal menus, and recipes to include colourful vegetable and fruit choices in your menu.

### ACTIVITIES

Use the fun, interactive games and activities during program learning times to increase children's familiarity with a range of vegetables and fruit.

### SUPPORTING AND ENGAGING FAMILIES

Use the sample newsletters, tips, and resources to promote the consumption of vegetables and fruit and reinforce their importance with parents.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey, Fruit and Vegetable Consumption, 2014. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-625-x/2015001/article/14182-eng.htm>. Accessed August 15, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. 2014. <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf>.

# Background The Paint Your Plate Approach

Paint Your Plate is based on a simple, positive concept designed to promote the consumption of vegetables and fruit of many colours, flavours, and textures in a child-friendly way. Different types of vegetables and fruit have different kinds and amounts of vitamins, minerals, and fibre. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, brown, white, and tan—the more colours on the plate, the healthier the meals and snacks.

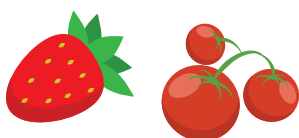
Children should eat at least one dark green vegetable (e.g., broccoli, romaine lettuce, green peas, spinach) and one orange vegetable or fruit (e.g., sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, cantaloupe, peaches) each day. But don't stop there! Eating the other colours of vegetables and fruit gives children the nutrition they need to grow and be healthy (e.g., red cherries and strawberries, blueberries and purple grapes, yellow peppers and squash, brown pears, and white parsnips).

Choosing at least one vegetable or fruit from each colour group is a key way for children to meet Canada's Food Guide. The Paint Your Plate toolkit guides child care providers to follow this approach within their setting.

## Paint Your Plate Colours

## Vegetables and Fruit

Red



Cherries, red apples, red cabbage, cranberries, red onions, pink/red grapefruit, watermelon, red peppers, beets, red tomatoes and tomato sauce, raspberries, radishes, rhubarb

Yellow,  
Orange



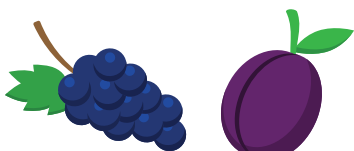
Carrots, sweet potatoes, squash, cantaloupe, canned peaches, mangoes, apricots, papayas, nectarines

Green



Dark green vegetables: green beans, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, romaine lettuce, asparagus, spinach, green peppers, edamame, peas, zucchini; additional green vegetable and fruit choices: avocados, cucumbers, artichokes, green apples, green cabbage, green grapes, kiwis

Blue,  
purple



Blackberries, plums, prunes, blackcurrants, blueberries, eggplants, figs, purple grapes

White, tan,  
brown



Bananas, potatoes, garlic, onion, pears, parsnips, turnips, mushrooms, cauliflower



### Caution

When promoting positive eating behaviours, it is important to avoid practices that could undermine children's positive experiences or learning.

Child care providers play a critical role in modelling positive attitudes and healthy behaviours. Making negative comments about the food and beverage choices served (e.g., "ugh, I don't like broccoli") does not set a good example for children.

Also, it is important to never pressure children to eat vegetables and fruit. Never bribe, coax, or force a child to eat a vegetable or fruit, or offer a reward for trying a new vegetable or fruit. The goal is to encourage children to develop positive eating behaviours and relationships with food in a supportive nutrition environment.

# Key Messages for Child Care Providers

The points below explain *why* children need vegetables and fruit, and the *positive influences* that encourage children to eat them.

## Benefits of vegetables and fruit:

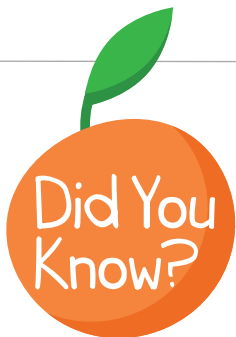
- Provide the vitamins, minerals, fibre, and energy that children need to grow, learn, play, and be healthy.
- Help children focus and perform better in school, sports, and other activities.
- May help lower the risk of cancer and heart disease.
- Satisfy hunger, especially during snack time.

## Ways to encourage children to eat vegetables and fruit:

- Expose them to vegetables and fruit as older infants and toddlers; food preferences are set early in a child's life.
- Ensure they see adults and other children eating vegetables and fruit.
- Frequently offer them vegetables and fruit at home and in child care.
- Serve vegetables and fruit as snacks between meals.
- Have them eat with others, away from distractions.
- Encourage them to help prepare vegetables and fruit.
- Ensure child care centre menus include vegetables and fruit.
- Encourage them to participate in gardening, food preparation, and nutrition education programs.

## Ways to increase **food literacy** and positive attitudes toward healthy eating:

- Ensure child care centres provide an abundance of vegetables and fruit and healthy meals and snacks.
- Encourage participation in gardening, food preparation, and nutrition education programs.



- **Food literacy** refers to the skills needed to make healthy, tasty, affordable meals and snacks.
- Teaching food literacy helps children make healthy food choices throughout their lives. This includes having the confidence to plan and select safe and healthy foods, the skills to prepare and use nutritious foods, and the ability to share this knowledge with others.
- To find food literacy resources and to learn how to include food literacy in healthy eating program planning, visit [FoodLiteracy.ca](http://FoodLiteracy.ca)



# Learning about Vegetables and Fruit

Child care settings support children's learning, development, health, and well-being. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)*<sup>2</sup> refers to the important relationships among children, families, educators, and their environments. Creating greater consistency between what child care providers say and do is a key way to strengthen children's programs.<sup>2</sup>

## Ways children learn positive eating behaviours:

- Build strong and trusting relationships with those who plan, prepare, and serve food.
- Practise eating behaviours in a supportive healthy eating environment that:
  - welcomes children into the space
  - supports their sense of belonging
  - provides opportunities to taste new foods and learn about them
  - is responsive to children's cues of hunger and fullness by providing healthy meals and snacks
  - is free from distractions (screens) and marketing influences

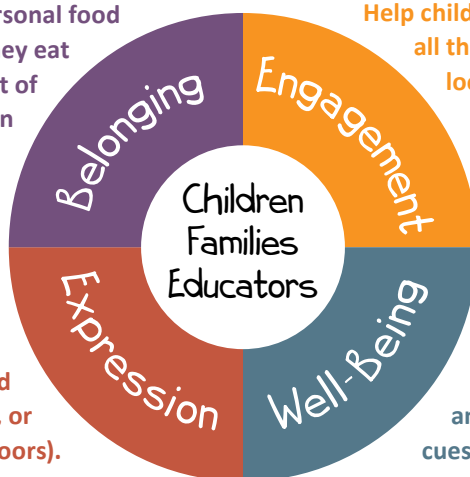
## Paint Your Plate and How Does Learning Happen

*How Does Learning Happen* is organized around four foundations for optimal learning and development: belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.<sup>2</sup> The table below relates the foundations to child care practices that encourage positive eating behaviours in children, with a focus on vegetables and fruit. Use the tips to help create a supportive nutrition environment in the centre.

### Support Eating Vegetables and Fruit with the Four Learning Foundations of Early Childhood Education

Encourage children to share their personal food experiences, including cultural food they eat at home. Ensure that children feel part of their mealtime group by involving them in activities (e.g., setting the table, serving food when appropriate, clearing dishes).

Provide activities that let children express feelings and ideas about vegetables and fruit (e.g., sing songs, look at books and pictures, create drawings and artwork about healthy food, play farm, or grow vegetables indoors or outdoors).



Help children experience vegetables and fruit with all their five senses—seeing how they grow and look, feeling their texture, tasting, smelling and touching them. Encourage children to talk with each other about these different sensory experiences.

Offer meals and snacks at regular times and allow children to provide vegetables and fruit menu ideas. Create positive eating environments with healthy foods and staff that are respectful of children's cues of hunger and fullness.

# Paint Your Plate and Foundations for Learning<sup>3</sup>

## Belonging cultivating Authentic Relationships and Connections

Encouraging children to share their personal food experiences (positive or negative) helps them feel connected to the program and other children. When talking about vegetables and fruit, share Paint Your Plate resources with parents. Children benefit when they receive the same healthy eating messages at home and at the centre.

### How children show a sense of identity and belonging

- Talk about ways they eat healthy outside the centre (e.g., taking orange slices for a healthy snack after soccer practice).
- Recognize that eating times are enjoyable social occasions (e.g., talking with friends).
- Share information about what they eat at home (e.g., cultural foods).
- Talk about where different foods come from and how they are grown, cooked, prepared, and eaten.
- Show an interest in and try different foods.
- Cooperate with the rules in place when food is being prepared, served, and eaten.
- Invite other children to join them at eating times.

### How the child care setting can help to create a sense of identity and belonging

- Value children's existing food experiences.
- Expose children to multi-cultural foods and food practices.
- Involve children in preparing meals or snacks, setting the table, clearing dishes, and serving food.
- Model mealtime social skills.
- Respect and nurture children during feeding and mealtimes.
- Let children express their feelings about different foods.
- Help children develop confidence to explore a wide range of vegetables and fruit without pressure.

## Well-Being Nurturing Healthy Development and Well-Being

Paint Your Plate activities build children's knowledge and encourage positive values about healthy eating, helping to set lifelong, healthy eating behaviours.

### How children demonstrate health and well-being

**Children eat well when they are in an environment that supports:**

- eating at regular times
- being able to communicate their need for food and drink, and when they have had enough
- being interested in exploring new foods

**Children show an increasing responsibility for their own health and well-being by:**

- recognizing when they are hungry
- making healthy eating choices
- understanding that healthy eating helps them to grow, learn, and play
- understanding that good food choices keep their teeth and gums healthy
- eating a variety of vegetables and fruit

### How the child care setting can foster health and well-being

- Create positive eating environments with healthy foods and staff that are respectful of children's cues of hunger and fullness.
- Offer meals and snacks at regular times.
- Let children offer ideas for meals and snacks (e.g., choose the snack vegetable).
- Expose children to a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit at meals and snacks.
- Talk about the things children can do because they eat healthy foods (e.g., run and jump, grow taller).
- Try activities that allow children to learn about the smell, texture, and taste of different vegetables and fruit.

## Engagement Creating Contexts for Learning through Exploration, Play, and Inquiry

**Paint Your Plate activities help children experience food with all their five senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching foods. They can explore their likes and dislikes. Food preferences change over time, and this is respected.**

### How children demonstrate engagement

**Children show respect for the food selections of others by:**

- listening to stories about different foods and eating habits
- being positive about what others eat

**Children show confidence, curiosity, and involvement in learning by:**

- expressing interest in food activities (e.g., food-based play, tasting, and gardening)
- exploring and sampling vegetables and fruit
- engaging in role playing with food as a focus (e.g., being a chef, a cook, a parent, a gardener, a shopper, a farmer)

### How the child care setting can foster engagement

- Invite children and families to share cultural and family values related to growing, cooking, preparing, and eating vegetables and fruit.
- Extend learning about the benefits of vegetables and fruit to the home.
- Expose children to new vegetables and fruit through a varied menu and with fun, creative, and interactive play.
- Encourage conversations about vegetables and fruit by:
  - comparing sensory aspects of different vegetables and fruit
  - reflecting on how cooking changes the appearance, taste, and texture of vegetables and fruit
  - discussing real-life experiences that involve food (e.g., cooking, shopping, gardening, preparing, and eating)

## Foster Communication and Expression in all Forms

**Enjoying a variety of foods, at pleasant eating times with a child care provider, helps children to explore new foods, learn table manners, and practise mealtime conversation. Paint Your Plate menus and recipes feature colourful vegetables and fruit. Play time activities foster communication and promote enjoyment of vegetables and fruit.**

### How children show their ability to express their ideas and opinions about food and healthy eating

- Be confident to try different foods.
- Share stories about favourite foods.
- Sing songs about healthy foods.
- Make creative representations of food through different media (e.g., collage, painting, modelling, sand, clay, playdough).
- Name and describe fruit, vegetables, and other foods.
- Explore the taste and texture of different vegetables and fruit through words and symbols.

### How programs can foster communication and expression

- Provide activities that let children express feelings and ideas about food and healthy eating.
- Provide opportunities for children to explore (i.e., touch, smell, lick, or eat) new vegetables and fruit. Children need many exposures to new foods. Respect that children will eat a new food when they are ready.
- Promote vegetables and fruit by:
  - reading and looking at books, pictures, and multi-media texts
  - recognizing and naming pictures of different vegetables and fruit
  - letting them create and tend to a garden or container garden
  - having them play farm
  - showing them that vegetables and food grow in different ways (e.g., in the ground or on trees)
  - encouraging them to help with meal preparation with age-appropriate tasks

# Responsive Feeding Practices Role Modelling

**Families and child care providers help children develop healthy eating habits when they model healthy eating behaviours and positive body image. Children are more likely to eat colourful vegetables and fruit and other healthy foods and drinks when they see others eating and enjoying them.**

Children are always watching and listening. What child care providers say and do have a significant impact on what children see as “normal.”

Child care providers’ and families’ attitudes toward healthy living, as well as their food choices, truly influence children’s lifestyle and nutrition habits. When children see that their caregivers value healthy eating, they may also begin to see the importance of making healthy food choices. However, the reverse is also true. If children see adults eating or drinking nutritionally poor choices, they receive the wrong or contradictory message from their role models.

Whether you mean to or not, your actions, attitudes, words, and behaviours influence children's food choices, food behaviours, and body image.



## What is Positive Role Modelling?

Positive role modelling is when adults enjoy eating well and being physically active, and talk about their lifestyle habits and body in a positive way. This helps children value healthy eating, enjoy moving their bodies, and accept and feel good about themselves.

### Benefits of positive role modelling:

- Reinforces healthy eating and body image education
- Encourages children to value and enjoy healthy eating
- Develops children's preferences for healthy foods and beverages
- Shows others that the child care setting takes the health of its children seriously

### Tips for positive role modelling:

- Encourage healthy choices by enjoying a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit at each meal and snack.
  - Show children you are open to and excited to try new vegetables and fruit, and enjoy eating them in different ways.
  - Avoid sharing personal dislike for foods or stating you do not eat certain foods.
  - Let children choose what to eat from the healthy foods offered; show them how to politely say "no thank you."
- Avoid categorizing foods as "good" or "bad."
- Respect that healthy bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and that healthy bodies look different for everyone.
  - Avoid commenting on the size, shape, or appearance of yourself and others.
  - Focus on positive attributes in yourself and others that are not related to appearance, such as attitudes, efforts, skills, talents, and abilities.
  - Avoid making assumptions on children's eating habits and activity levels based on their weight/shape.
- Eat regular meals and snacks, pay attention to hunger and fullness cues, and encourage children to do the same.
  - When possible, choose from the same food and beverages offered to children.
  - Eat with children, when possible. Use this time to talk about the foods offered and role model proper utensil use and table manners.

## What is Your Role Modelling Practice?

Reflect on if or how your behaviours show positive role modelling when you eat together with children.

### Ways to set a good example:

- Choose from the same foods and beverages served to children, when appropriate.
- Avoid bringing in personal food and beverages in areas where children are present.
- Refrain from using personal electronics (e.g., cell phones) during snack and meal times.
- Refrain from making negative comments about the food and beverage choices served.
- Refrain from conversations about body size, amount of food eaten, dieting, and weight loss.
- Treat all children the same way regardless of their body size or shape (e.g., avoid making judgment on the amount of food a child chooses to eat).
- Refrain from making assumptions about how well or poorly a child will eat based on their weight.



# Principles for Raising a Healthy Eater

## What does "normal" eating look like?

It is normal for children's appetites to vary day to day and meal to meal, depending on their activity level, if they are tired, or if they are going through a growth spurt. Some days they will eat a lot, and other days they may only eat a little. They may even skip a meal or two. Children know how much they need to eat, and will eat when they are hungry and stop eating when they are satisfied.

Children go through periods when they will only eat a few different foods. This is called a "food jag." They may also resist trying new foods. This is how children gain control and independence in their lives.

## Say goodbye to mealtime stress with these tips!

Caregivers and children have different "jobs" at mealtimes. Children learn to eat best when adults know their role and children are allowed to do their job.

### The CAREGIVER decides:

- what foods to offer
- when to offer meals and snacks
- where the child will eat

### The CHILD decides:

- whether to eat
- how much food to eat

- **Learn to recognize and respect children's hunger and fullness cues; trust that children know how much to eat and respect their appetite.**

- Do not pressure children to eat more food if they are satisfied.
- Offer more food to children if they are still hungry.

- **Offer meals and snacks around the same time each day so children know when to expect their next meal.**

- Offer only water between meals and snacks.
- When possible, eat with children and ensure eating times are free from distraction.

- **Offer new foods one at a time, along with familiar, healthy foods that children enjoy.**

- Be patient and never pressure children to eat. It may take 10–15 tries before a child will accept a new food.
- Give children time to explore, touch, and taste their food. Young children need time to experience food, eat, and learn how to use utensils.

- **Serve foods in interesting ways.**

- Offer raw veggies with salsa, guacamole, hummus, bean dip, or plain yogurt.
- Grate, grill, bake, mash, or steam vegetables. Enjoy them plain, with cheese, or with a dressing.
- Add vegetables to stir fries, casseroles, lasagna, pita, pizza, muffins, pasta sauce, tacos, stews, soups, salads, wraps, and omelettes.

- **Model healthy eating by enjoying a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit.**

- Children like to copy what adults and other children do.
- Remember that we all have different tastes. Children pick up messages about how you view food; if you are excited about a new food, they may be too.
- Talk about the (new) fruit and vegetables offered: their taste, texture, colour, how they grow, etc.

- **Keep mealtimes positive.**

- Never use food as a reward or punishment. This practice can link emotions to food.
- Do not force children to eat or drink against their will.

## Avoid Using Food as a Reward

It is important to not use food as a reward or punishment. This practice can teach children to prefer some food over others, especially sweets which can lead to dental decay. It interferes with children's internal cues that help them know when they are hungry and when they have eaten enough. Instead, teach children to think of food as a way of giving their bodies the nutrients they need.

### Do not:

- offer food to reinforce positive behaviours
- withhold food as a punishment
- delay access to a food or to certain types of foods, such as dessert or snack; offer dessert even if a child does not finish the main meal

### Use a treasure box of non-food rewards:

- stickers
- playing cards
- chalk
- Slinkies
- fun shaped straws
- Frisbees
- crayons
- skipping ropes
- note pads
- hair accessories

### Other ways to activate and inspire children:

- Allow them to be first in line
- Pick the book at circle time
- Let them choose a favourite game to play
- Have a spontaneous dance session
- Let them choose a favourite physical activity
- Have a "bring your favourite stuffed animal to child care" day
- Have them act as the "helper" of the week/month
- Give them a mini-trophy for the day



## Phrases that Help / Hinder in Common Eating Situations

Situation	Phrases/Action that Hinder a Child's Eating		Phrases/Actions that Help a Child's Eating	
Child refuses to eat what is offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making something else you know the child will like.</li> <li>• "You can't leave the table until you try one bite."</li> <li>• "It will help you grow big and strong."</li> </ul>	<p>Making something else for a child who refuses the food served can lead to a cycle of food refusal and short order cooking.</p> <p>The phrases pressure/coax the child to eat, which may lead children to develop unhealthy attitudes and behaviours toward food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer one or two healthy foods you know the child likes.</li> <li>• Teach children to be polite when refusing food.</li> <li>• "You can eat some of the other foods on the table if you don't feel like trying this one."</li> </ul>	<p>Letting children decide what to eat helps them feel in control and develop a healthy relationship with food.</p>
Child tries new food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "That wasn't so bad, was it?"</li> <li>• "I'm proud of you for trying that."</li> </ul>	<p>These phrases imply the child was wrong to refuse the food, and may lead to the child eating to get the caregiver's approval.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I see you tried it, what did you think?"</li> </ul>	<p>This phrase helps children feel in control. It focuses on the food itself instead of who was right, and avoids linking emotion to food.</p>
Child says he/she is full or wants to leave the table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Good boy/girl, you ate all your food."</li> <li>• "One more bite, then you can go."</li> </ul>	<p>These phrases teach children to ignore their fullness cues and to eat for approval.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Is your stomach telling you it's full?"</li> <li>• "Is your stomach not hungry anymore?"</li> </ul>	<p>These phrases help children to recognize their hunger and fullness cues.</p>
Child refuses to eat vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "There will be no dessert until you finish your vegetables."</li> </ul>	<p>This phrase turns dessert into a "reward" and makes it more desirable than other foods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "We can try these vegetables another time. Would you like to try them raw next time?"</li> </ul>	<p>This phrase helps children feel in control, keeps food neutral, and avoids rewarding children for eating.</p>
Child is upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "You can have a cookie if you stop crying."</li> </ul>	<p>This phrase can lead to children eating to feel better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I am sorry you are sad. What made you feel sad?"</li> </ul>	<p>Comfort children with words, hugs, and attention.</p>

## Offer a Family-Style Meal Service<sup>4</sup>

Family-style meals provide a learning opportunity for children by having adults and children share a meal together. Encourage children to serve themselves from the food on the table. This lets them decide which foods and how much to eat.



### How to offer a family-style meal service:

- Have child care providers sit with children and eat the same foods. When adults eat more vegetables and fruit, children are more likely to eat these foods too.
- Encourage children to talk and have conversation.
- Remove all distractions during meal and snack times (e.g., screens, toys, books, etc.).
- Properly supervise all children. This includes making sure they are sitting upright at the table while eating and not lying down, running around, or distracted.

### Benefits of a family-style meal service:

- Encourages positive eating behaviours and table manners through role modelling.
- Allows children to decide what and how much to eat.
- Helps with developing motor, language, and social skills.
- Encourages children to try new foods.

### Food safety tips for a family-style meal service:

- Have everyone wash their hands before and after eating.
- Serve food in containers with lids so they can be covered after passing.
- Provide appropriate serving utensils for the food offered.
- Caution children to avoid touching the food or part of the utensil/container that touches food.
- Provide a clean serving utensil if someone drops or touches it.
- Throw away any leftover food or drinks that are on the table after the meal or snack.
- Teach children to leave the utensil in the bowl with the handle facing out after they have served themselves.
- Have children serve themselves only.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted with the permission of The Regional Municipality of Waterloo (Public Health and Emergency Services).



# Supportive Environments

A supportive environment goes hand-in-hand with responsive feeding practices. It is a way for centres to provide a consistent message about healthy eating, and reinforces the nutritious meals and snacks they provide. Here are a few examples of how centres can show they value and support children to become healthy eaters.

## Physical Space

The physical space in child care centres is important for learning and the development of healthy eating habits.

The eating area should be an inclusive, welcoming space for all children and reflect the diversity of the community. It must have appropriate furniture for family-style meals, as well as eating utensils, open cups, and plates for young children. It should be organized to enrich children's interactions and meet their unique feeding needs.

## Gardens

When children have the opportunity to grow vegetables (i.e., plant, water, and harvest) they are also more likely to eat them. This positive, hands-on food education allows children to use all their senses and helps them develop positive relationships with vegetables and fruit.



Connect with your local health unit for more information on gardening at your child care program to help ensure that your garden is not only fun, but also safe.



## Healthy Fundraisers

Do you run fundraising activities for your program? Did you know that fundraising with healthy foods, non-food items, or events that encourage physical activity can generate more profit than fundraising with sweet or high-fat foods? Along with generating revenue, healthy fundraisers offer other benefits. Use these opportunities to model healthy eating through words and actions, and help families make healthier food choices at home and on the go.

### HEALTHY FUNDRAISING OPTIONS:

apples  
citrus fruit  
hearty bean soup mix  
cheese  
dried pasta



### Fundraising ... beyond food:

- calendars
- holiday gift items
- flower bulbs/garden plants
- mini first aid kits
- greeting cards/stationery items
- gift wrap

### Other activities:

- Organize a walk-a-thon.
- Organize a play, talent show, or fashion show.
- Partner with a local nursery and sell flower baskets or bedding plants.
- Hold a raffle for gift baskets. Try different themes (e.g., Italian theme basket with ingredients for a dinner for four, Italian music CD, cookbook, and red checkered table cloth).
- Ask local stores to donate gift certificates for a healthy prize (e.g., fruit or veggie trays, sports equipment) and sell raffle tickets.
- Plan a flea market; sell used books or sports equipment.
- Collect donated items for a garage sale.

## Special Functions

Who doesn't love a celebration? Birthdays, holidays, end-of-year parties, and family events are common in child care settings. Special occasions can be fun, festive, *and* healthy with a little planning. Use music, arts and crafts, games, stories, and songs to create excitement for children and teach them that healthy food can also be "fun" food.

### Follow these guidelines when planning celebrations:

- Plan celebrations around activities, not food.
- Serve food and beverages that comply with the *Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide* (available from [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)).
- Ensure celebration foods don't compete with the regular meals and snacks.
- Identify food and beverages to be served in advance of the special event.
- Honour customs and cultural practices. Invite families to share a special dance, song, or decoration unique to their culture.
- Provide clear guidance to parents that outside foods are not permitted at events hosted by the child care setting. Instead encourage families to bring decorations or festive party favours.



### Celebrate by allowing the birthday child to:

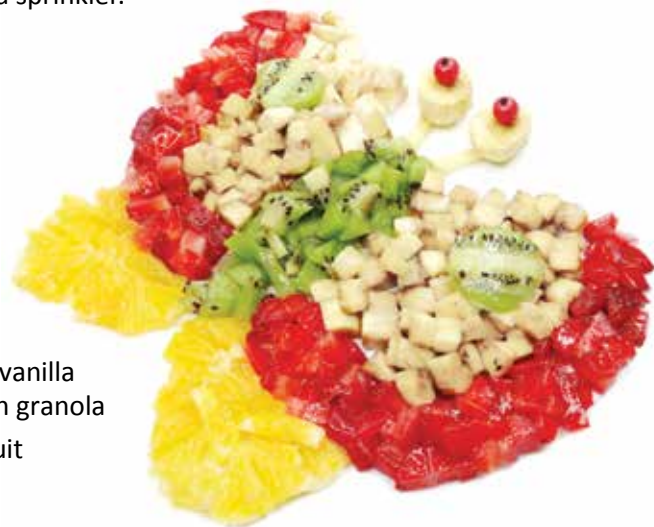
- be leader of the day
- wear a birthday crown
- choose the game for indoor/outdoor play
- choose the background music for the day

### Celebrate with activities:

- Hold a scavenger hunt. Search for hidden containers filled with crayons, stickers, bubbles, or playdough.
- Plan a field trip to the library, a local park, or a farmer's market.
- Head outside to blow bubbles, make a snowman, or run through a sprinkler.

### Celebrate with healthy snacks:

- Vegetables and fruit mosaic platter; arrange cut-up veggies and fruit into a unique shape such as a flower, a gold star, or the number of the child's birthday
- Fruit kabobs with yogurt dip
- Whole grain pumpkin muffins
- Vegetables and dip (e.g., green veggies and spinach dip)
- Make-your-own yogurt parfait; mix plain yogurt with equal parts vanilla yogurt, then layer with fresh fruit and a tablespoon of whole grain granola
- Fruit salad cones; fill flat-bottomed ice cream cones with diced fruit
- Cheese cubes and whole grain crackers





## Promotion and Advertising

Children are easily influenced by food marketing via the Internet, television, games, toys, and character placement on food products, clothing, dishes, utensils, and placemats. Often, the food and beverages marketed to children are higher in fat, salt, and/or sugar. Marketing influences children's food choices and purchase requests. Children are more likely to prefer and have higher intakes of less healthy foods because of advertising.

You can support children to become healthy eaters by encouraging and promoting "Serve Most Often" food choices. Check out the *Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide* (available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)) for examples.

### Ways to limit children's exposure to unhealthy advertising:

- Avoid the use of promotional materials that advertise a specific brand or character.
- Ensure dishes, utensils, and placemats used for meals and snacks are free of comic characters or other branding.
- Do not accept or display advertising of food products.

## Note:

Display attractive, current, Canadian materials that encourage healthy eating and breastfeeding. Contact your local Health Unit; they may be able to provide these promotional items.

# Charters and Policies

Child care settings have different needs and capacities for implementing best practices in healthy eating. For a simple guide to encourage healthy eating practices and show expectations of parents, staff, and children, a charter is the best option; for a stronger and more detailed statement that is enforced, develop a policy instead.

## Healthy Eating Charters

### What is a healthy eating charter?

A healthy eating charter (sometimes called a food charter) is a guiding statement of the child care centre's values around promoting healthy eating and creating supportive environments. A healthy eating charter states what the centre believes to be important for helping children to be well-nourished, competent eaters. Post it on a visible bulletin board and distribute it to all new families, so everyone is aware of your position. See the sample healthy eating charter adapted from City of Peterborough Municipal Child Care Programs and sample policies below.

---

## Healthy Eating Charter for Our Child Care Program

We are committed to:

### Offering a variety of foods and beverages from Canada's Food Guide every day

#### Vegetables and Fruit

- We offer a variety of colourful vegetables and/or fruit at each meal and snack. We offer fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit, or drained fruit that was canned in its own juice.
- Vegetables are steamed, baked, or lightly stir-fried with no added fat, sugar, or salt.

#### Grain Products

- We offer a variety of high fibre, whole grain foods daily, including whole grain breads, cereals, and pastas.

#### Milk and Alternatives

- We offer milk daily. Yogurt and cheese are offered regularly each week.

#### Meat and Alternatives

- We offer lean meats and meat alternatives, and use cooking methods that require little or no added fat or salt, such as roasting and baking.
  - We avoid processed foods by offering meals prepared in-house or by a caterer.
  - We offer meat alternatives often, such as beans, lentils, and tofu.
  - We use healthy fats such as olive oil and non-hydrogenated margarine.
-



## Making water available throughout the day

- We make drinking water freely available so children can serve themselves.
- We do not serve fruit juice, punches, pop, or chocolate milk.

## Supporting healthy eating

### Variety

- Our menus include healthy items from a variety of cultures.
- Our menus include a combination of new and familiar foods.

### Feeding Practices

- Educators join children at the table for meals and snacks, and role model healthy eating.
- We respect children's hunger cues, and do not force or bribe children to eat.
- Educators do not use food to encourage positive behaviour.
- We celebrate holidays with healthy foods or non-food items such as books.

## Nutrition education

- We provide training opportunities for all child care staff on healthy eating.
- We take the opportunity to educate children on healthy eating, with information provided by registered dietitians and/or the local public health unit.
- We share healthy eating information and resources with parents.





# Healthy Eating Policies

## What is a policy?

A policy is a clear written statement that is enforced. It provides a set of principles to help make decisions.

## Why are policies important?

Clear, specific policies support children's learning, development, and health. They guide child care providers in making choices about the best daily practices to follow by making the expectations clear.

### Why do child care programs need healthy eating policies?

#### Clear policies will help:

- Create a plan for providing food and beverages that are healthy, safe, and varied.
- Comply with government legislation.
- Set expectations and roles for child care providers and parents.
- Give clear steps for managing special needs (e.g., allergies, religious observances) and special occasions (e.g., birthdays).
- Identify areas for improvement.
- Educate child care providers and parents on best practices.
- Guide daily decisions at your centre.
- Ensure that children get the same care in every classroom, every day.

## Tips for making your policies work

- Adapt the sample policy statements (below) so they make sense for your centre. Settings differ in where and how food is purchased, the types of food purchased, the type of meal service, the equipment available, and the facility layout.
- Talk with child care providers and parents when developing policies. Emphasize the policy benefits, focussing on supporting children's optimal health at an important stage of development.
- Provide child care providers with access to the training needed to understand and follow the policies (e.g., a menu planning workshop).
- Set a clear standard for new parents by informing them about the policies when they enrol.
- Continually promote the policies to child care providers and parents: share a copy of the policies, discuss challenges at child care providers meetings, and include updates in parent newsletters.



# Sample Policies

## Sample Policy #1: Promoting Vegetables and Fruit

**[Date policy was developed]**

**[Child care centre]** providers teach about vegetables and fruit, and provide a variety of vegetables and fruit as part of daily meals and snacks.

- Staff incorporate vegetables and fruit activities into the curriculum.
- Staff plan and provide healthy meals and snacks that include vegetables and fruit.
- Staff role model healthy eating and attitudes toward vegetables and fruit at meal times.
- Staff expose children to a variety of vegetables and fruit without pressure.

### Legislation/Guidelines:

[Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15)

[Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](#)  
available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years 2014](#)

**[Date approved]**

Approved by:

Next review date:



## Sample Policy #2: Menu Planning

***[Date policy was developed]***

***[Child care centre]*** offers nutritious meals and snacks that meet the *Child Care and Early Years Act* and amendments, and follows Health Canada's recommendations for feeding young children.

- Menus are planned in accordance with the [Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](#) (available from [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)):
  - Offer foods and beverages from the "Serve Most Often" category.
  - Offer foods and beverages from the "Serve Sometimes" category no more than three times per week.
  - Do not offer foods and beverages from the "Do Not Serve" category.
- Children in care for six or more hours are offered lunch and two snacks.
- Lunch includes the following number of CFG servings:
  - two choices from the Vegetables and Fruit food group
  - one choice from the Grain Products food group
  - one choice from the Milk and Alternatives food group
  - one choice from the Meat and Alternatives food group
- Meals and snacks are spaced two and a half to three hours apart.
- Portion sizes are age-appropriate and align with recommendations in the Practical Guide.
- Snacks include foods from at least two food groups and promote dental health.
  - Each snack includes one choice from the Vegetables and Fruit food group.
- Every day, menus include:
  - one dark green vegetable
  - one orange vegetable or fruit
- Every week, menus include:
  - one serving of low-mercury fish
  - Meat Alternatives such as beans, lentils, and tofu

### **Legislation/Guidelines:**

[Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15)

[Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](#)

***[Date approved]***

Approved by:

Next review date:

## Sample Policy #3: Healthy Beverages

***[Date policy was developed]***

***[Child care centre]*** offers beverages to children to satisfy thirst and provide nutrients required for optimal growth and development.

- Beverages provided to children consist only of:
  - breast milk for children of any age whose parents supply expressed breast milk
  - cow's milk, unless otherwise advised by caregiver (e.g., in the case of allergies)
  - safe tap water
- 3.25% M.F. cow's milk is served to children from 9 months to 2 years of age; 2% M.F. cow's milk is served to preschool children.
- For children 2 years and older who do not drink cow's milk due to milk allergy or for religious or cultural reasons, a fortified, unflavoured soy beverage is offered.
  - Other plant-based beverages, such as almond, coconut, rice, or hemp beverages are not offered as a beverage to children of any age, unless otherwise advised by caregiver (e.g., in the case of allergies).
- Beverages are provided in an open cup.
- Drinking water is clearly visible and available to all children at all times, including during and between meals and snacks.
- Tap water is the only beverage served between meals and snacks.
- Sugar-sweetened beverages (e.g., flavoured milks, juice, punches, cocktails) and beverages containing artificial sweeteners or caffeine are not offered.

### **Legislation/Guidelines:**

[Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15)

[Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](#)

***[Date approved]***

Approved by:

Next review date:

## Sample Policy #4: Healthy Eating Environment

***[Date policy was developed]***

***[Child care centre]*** creates a healthy eating environment by role modelling healthy eating behaviours and allowing children to decide how much to eat from what is offered.

### **At Meals and Snacks:**

- Child care providers follow the division of responsibility with respect to feeding children. Children decide how much to eat from what is offered at meals and snacks, and whether to eat at all.
- Child care providers do not:
  - bribe or coax children into eating or drinking
  - praise or reward children for eating or drinking
- At least one child care provider sits with the children during snack and mealtimes.
- Child care providers encourage mealtimes that are pleasant and positive social times, during which children have conversations.
- Child care providers are encouraged to eat the same foods as the children at meal and snack times so they can act as role models.
- Child care providers do not eat their own personal food or drinks brought from home until they are on a break in a designated area.
- Children are seated at a table or in a high chair when eating.
- There are no toys, books, screens, or other distractions at the table while eating.
- Children have at least 20 minutes to eat snacks and meals after being seated.
- Child care providers involve children in some aspect of mealtimes in an age-appropriate manner (i.e., setting or clearing the table).

### **At All Times:**

- Child care providers do not comment on their own body shape, size, height, or weight, or those of others.
- Child care providers do not offer food or drinks:
  - as a reward for good behaviour
  - outside of meals and snacks (other than water)
  - to comfort children when they are upset
- When fundraising, only non-food items or foods that are “Serve Most Often” are used.
- The centre promotes non-food celebrations, and if foods and beverages are served, they are “Serve Most Often” or “Serve Sometimes” choices.

### **Legislation/Guidelines:**

[Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#) (section 42 of Ontario Regulation 137/15)

[Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings –Practical Guide](#)

***[Date approved]***

Approved by:

Next review date:





# Menu Planning and Recipes

Children need to eat a variety of both vegetables and fruit to get the nutrients they need to grow and be healthy. Choose a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit to meet Canada's Food Guide recommendations while adding variety to the child care centre's meals and snacks.

For more information on the amounts and types of foods and beverages to prepare and offer children in your care, refer to [Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](https://odph.ca/child-care-resources) (Available from [odph.ca/child-care-resources](https://odph.ca/child-care-resources))

## Serving Vegetables and Fruit Safely

Babies and young children can choke on round foods like grapes, and hard foods like raw carrots. To reduce the risk of choking, always supervise children during mealtimes and help children to stay seated while they are eating.

### Ways to make vegetables and fruit safer to eat:

- Rinse fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Finely chop foods with fibrous or stringy textures (e.g., celery, pineapple).
- Cut round foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes into quarters.
- Grate or cook hard vegetables and fruit to soften them (e.g., apples, carrots).
- Adjust textures using a knife, blender, baby food mill, wire sieve and spoon, potato masher, or fork.
- Always supervise young children while they are eating.
- Store raw vegetables and fruit above high-risk foods in the fridge (e.g., meat, fish, dairy products).
- Use a dedicated cutting board for vegetables and fruit, separate from meat and fish.
- Check the expiry date on store-bought prepared vegetables and fruit.



## Menu Planning and Your Child Care Budget

Planning your child care menus based on tips from the [Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](https://odph.ca/child-care-resources) (available from [odph.ca/child-care-resources](https://odph.ca/child-care-resources)) will help ensure you are offering healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks to children in your program. This will also help you save time and money.



## Practical and Economical Tips to Include Vegetables and Fruit on Your Menu<sup>5</sup>

- Use recipes that include fresh vegetables and fruit in season. Freeze extras for later.
- Emphasize beans, lentils, and other legumes. When offering a vegetarian main meal, double check that the Meat and Alternative portion is adequate. If not, add a second Meat and Alternative. Example from sample menu: Serve chana masala with lentil daal.
- Grow your own vegetables and fruit in a child care garden. You do not need a lot of space—tomatoes, lettuce, basil, radishes, cucumber, spinach, and many others can be grown in containers in a sunny location or on a balcony. Connect with your local health unit for more information on gardening at your child care program to help ensure that your garden is not only fun, but also safe.
- Include herbs and spices in your meals.
- Enjoy frozen vegetables and fruit as a cheaper, nutritious option when fresh produce is not in season.
- Avoid waste by buying fresh fruit at different stages of ripeness. Choose some fruit that is ripe and ready to eat, and some that will ripen in a few days.
- Don't let vegetables and fruit go to waste. Use them up by making soup, smoothies, or a fruit salad.
- Stock up on low-sodium canned vegetables and canned fruit packed in juice when they are on sale.
- Get to know your local food prices. Write down and keep track of the regular prices of foods you buy often. This will help you figure out which stores have the best prices or a good deal on sale items.
- Compare prices. Compare the unit price on the label or shelf sticker price to know which product is less expensive. Use flyers to price match products on sale in grocery stores (if available).
- Choose store brands. Store brand items are nutritious and are usually cheaper than the brands with fancy packaging. Try products such as frozen vegetables/fruit and canned vegetables/fruit.
- Store your food properly to help minimize waste. Apples turn soft quickly at room temperature, so keep them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper. Store mushrooms in a paper bag, not in a plastic bag. Keep potatoes in a cool, dark, dry place away from the onions.

<sup>5</sup> Material adapted from EatRight Ontario now UnlockFood.ca



## Menu Cycle

Using a four- to six-week menu cycle helps you to plan for and promote variety. Many child care programs choose to offer seasonal menus such as spring/summer and fall/winter (see the sample menus that follow). Vegetables and fruits of all colours, when in season, promote variety, help reduce costs, and allow educators and cooks to connect healthy eating programming with the foods offered on the menu. See the **Activities** section for ideas. For more information on the portion size ranges for children of different ages, refer to [\*Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide\* \(Available from \[odph.ca/child-care-resources\]\(http://odph.ca/child-care-resources\)\)](#)

### Fill your menu with recipes that include:

- ☐ colourful vegetables and fruit, especially green and orange options
- ☐ whole grain and whole wheat options
- ☐ lean meat and alternatives including eggs, beans, peas, and lentils
- ☐ healthy fat options such as olive oil, canola oil, and non-hydrogenated margarines
- ☐ cultural and traditional meals and snack options





# Spring / Summer Sample Menu

Recipes are provided for italicized and bolded items.

Refer to [Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](#) for recommended meal and snack patterns and portion sizes.



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Snack</b>	<i><b>Strawberry and Rhubarb Sauce</b></i> w/ cinnamon pita triangles	cold cereal w/ berries	fruit smoothie w/ whole wheat toast	<i><b>Cinnamon Apple Bites</b></i> w/ banana coins	<i><b>Wild Rice and Blueberry Pancakes</b></i> w/ <i><b>Peach Sauce</b></i>
<b>Lunch</b>	vegetable stir-fry w/ pork and noodles orange slices	tuna salad pitas w/ <i><b>Carrot Soup</b></i>	meatballs w/ <i><b>Oven Baked Sweet Potato Wedges</b></i> green peas	<i><b>Butternut Squash Frittata</b></i> w/ <i><b>Strawberry Spinach Salad</b></i>	<i><b>Veggie and Fish Tacos</b></i> and <i><b>Guacamole</b></i> apple slices
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	pork	tuna	beef	eggs	fish
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>	vegetables in stir fry	vegetables in pita wraps	sweet potato	butternut squash	vegetables in tacos
	orange slices	carrots in soup	green peas	spinach strawberries	apples
<b>Grain Products</b>	whole grain noodles	whole grain pita pockets	whole wheat roll	whole grain slice of bread	whole grain tortillas
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	milk	milk	milk	milk	milk
<b>Other Foods</b>		mayonnaise			
<b>Snack</b>	mozzarella cheese cubes w/ grapes	honeydew w/ yogurt	oatmeal muffin w/ peaches	sweet peppers w/ yogurt dip and whole grain crackers	<i><b>Hummus</b></i> and cucumber slices w/mini whole grain pitas

# Fall / Winter Sample Menu

Recipes are provided for italicized and bolded items.

Refer to [Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide](#) for recommended meal and snack patterns and portion sizes.



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Snack</b>	cold cereal and bananas w/ milk	mini <b><i>Carrot and Raisin Bran Muffins</i></b> w/ canned peaches	berry smoothie w/ whole wheat English muffin	apple sauce w/ granola	French toast w/ berries
<b>Lunch</b>	<b><i>Vegetable Chana Masala</i></b> and lentil daal w/ whole grain noodles orange slices	<b><i>Butternut Squash Macaroni and Cheese</i></b> w/ homemade chicken strips <b><i>Kale Salad</i></b>	beef & veggie chili w/ quinoa pears	broccoli quiche w/ garden salad garden salad & whole grain roll fruit cocktail	<b><i>Veggie and Bean Quesadillas</i></b> w/ <b><i>Vegetable Minestrone Soup</i></b> apple slices
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	chickpeas, lentils	chicken strips tofu in dressing	beef beans	egg	beans in quesadillas and soup
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>	vegetables in Chana Masala	butternut squash	vegetables in chili	vegetables in salad	vegetables in soup
	orange slices	kale	pears	fruit cocktail	apple slices
<b>Grain Products</b>	whole grain noodles	whole grain macaroni	quinoa	whole grain roll	whole grain tortillas
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	milk	cheese milk	milk	milk	cheese milk
<b>Other Foods</b>		Caesar dressing			sour cream salsa
<b>Snack</b>	egg salad w/ whole grain crackers and sweet peppers	cheddar slices w/ apples	<b><i>Pico de Gallo Salsa</i></b> w/ whole grain pita chips	green peppers and cherry tomatoes with tzatziki	yogurt & banana coins

# Recipes

Recipes were chosen or adapted from the CATCH Healthy Eating Manual, You're the Chef! and child care programs across Ontario. Child care staff tested them to ensure accuracy, ease of preparation and appeal to children. The recipes provide suggested portion sizes for 2- to 5-year-old children and emphasize vegetables and fruit as recommended in the [\*Menu Planning & Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings Practical Guide\*](#)

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# Beet and Apple Salad

Makes 4 cups (12 child-sized  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup portions)

## What you need

Romaine lettuce 1 small head  
Apple 1 medium, peeled  
Fresh beet 1 medium, peeled and grated  
Brown lentils 1 cup (250 mL) cooked or low-sodium canned,  
rinsed and drained

## Dressing

Olive or canola oil  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 mL)  
Lemon juice 2 Tbsp (30 mL)  
Dill 2 Tbsp (30 mL) chopped fresh, or 2 tsp (10 mL) dried  
Dijon mustard 1 tsp (5 mL)  
Salt  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp (1 mL)  
Pepper  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp (1 mL)

## Instructions

1. Wash, dry, and then tear lettuce into bite-sized pieces.
2. Wash and pat apple dry. Remove core. Dice apple into very small pieces.
3. Wash and then grate raw peeled beet.
4. Whisk together oil, lemon juice, dill, Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper.
5. Toss lettuce with half of the dressing.
6. Toss apple with 1 Tbsp of the dressing. Scatter apple over lettuce.
7. Toss beets and lentils with the rest of the dressing. Spoon into the centre of the salad.



# Broccoli Cauliflower Salad

Makes 4 cups (16 child-sized  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup portions)

## What you need

Fresh broccoli 2 heads, finely chopped  
Fresh cauliflower 1 head, finely chopped  
Cheddar cheese 2 cups (500 mL), shredded  
Apple 1 medium peeled,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup grated (125 mL)  
Sunflower seeds *(omit for children under 4 years of age due to choking risk)*  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 mL)

## DRESSING

Mayonnaise  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 mL)  
Plain yogurt  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (190 mL)  
Granulated sugar 2 Tbsp (30 mL)  
Vinegar  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60 mL)

## Instructions

1. To make the dressing, combine mayonnaise, yogurt, sugar, and vinegar in a medium-size bowl. Set aside.
2. Wash broccoli and cauliflower under cool tap water. Remove stems and leaves and finely chop both vegetables.
3. Bring a medium pot of water to boil. Add finely chopped broccoli and cauliflower for 30–60 seconds.
4. Drain and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking process. Add to bowl.
5. Pour salad dressing over salad and stir to evenly distribute dressing.
6. Add cheese, grated apples, and sunflower seeds (if using) and mix well. Serve chilled.

## Cook's Tip

Roasting the broccoli and cauliflower gives the salad a great flavour and different texture. This salad can also be made a day ahead.

# Butternut Squash Frittata

Makes 1 frittata (8 child-sized portions)

## What you need

Butternut squash	2 lbs (900 g), peeled
Fresh rosemary	2 tsp (10 mL), chopped or 1/4 tsp (1 mL) dried
Fresh thyme	1 Tbsp (15 mL), chopped or 1 tsp (5 mL) dried
Cheddar cheese	1 ¼ cups (300 mL), grated
Eggs	8 whole
Water	4 Tbsp (60 mL)
Salt	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Nutmeg	¼ tsp (1 mL)

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 °F (200 °C).
2. Cut squash into 2 cm chunks (you should have about 4 cups/1 L).
3. Sprinkle squash with half of rosemary and thyme.
4. Spread squash on baking sheet lined with parchment paper. If you do not have parchment paper, spray baking sheet with cooking spray.
5. Roast in oven for about 30 minutes, or until lightly browned and tender. Cool.
6. Turn oven down to 350 °F (180 °C).
7. Place roasted squash in a lightly oiled 9-inch (2.5 L) square baking dish and sprinkle top with grated cheese.
8. Beat eggs with water, salt, pepper, remaining rosemary and thyme, and nutmeg. Pour over squash.
9. Place baking dish on a baking sheet in oven at 350 °F (180 °C) for 30 to 35 minutes, or until centre of frittata is firm, and internal temperature of 165 °F (74 °C) is reached.
10. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

## Cook's Tip



Substitute butternut squash with zucchini, yams, peppers, or any other type of squash. This frittata is delicious served with a salad.

# Butternut Squash Macaroni and Cheese

Makes 18 cups  
(36 child-sized  
½ cup portions)

## What you need

Dry whole grain macaroni	9 cups (900 g dry macaroni)
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Non-hydrogenated margarine	4 Tbsp (60 mL)
Onion	1 medium, grated
Thyme	4 Tbsp (60 mL) fresh or 1 tsp (5 mL) dried
Whole wheat flour	6 Tbsp (90 mL)
Low-sodium chicken stock	4 cups (1 L)
Roasted butternut squash	1 medium chopped or 6 cups (1500 mL) frozen cooked, defrosted
Milk	2 cups (500 mL)
Cheddar cheese	3 cups (750 mL), grated
Black pepper	1 tsp (5 mL)

## Instructions

1. Cook pasta to al dente and drain well.
2. Heat pot over medium heat and add oil and margarine.
3. When the margarine melts into the oil, add thyme and grated onion. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Add flour to pot and cook another 1 to 2 minutes.
5. Slowly whisk in stock while stirring. Bring to a boil.
6. Add butternut squash and continue stirring until warmed through.
7. Use an immersion blender and blend squash mixture until smooth.
8. Stir in milk and bring sauce to a bubble.
9. Stir in cheese.
10. Combine drained pasta with sauce.
11. Pour combined pasta with sauce into a greased baking dish.
12. Bake at 350 °F (180 °C) for 30 minutes until bubbly and heated to an internal temperature of 165 °F (74 °C).

## Cook's Tip



Try this recipe with sweet potato instead of squash. Bake it in muffin cups topped with whole wheat bread crumbs and a bit of parmesan cheese for a fun finger food option! Enjoy with a salad or a variety of vegetable sticks.



# Carrot and Raisin Bran Muffins

Makes 24 mini muffins (12 child-sized portions)

## What you need

Whole wheat flour	1 cup (250 mL)
High-fibre bran cereal	1 cup (250 mL)
Baking powder	1 tsp (5 mL)
Baking soda	1 tsp (5 mL)
Ground cinnamon	1 tsp (5 mL)
Ground nutmeg	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Salt	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Eggs	2 whole
Carrots	2 cups (500 mL), grated
Buttermilk or sour milk*	¾ cup (175 mL)
Brown sugar	⅓ cup (80 mL), packed
Olive or canola oil	¼ cup (60 mL)
Raisins	½ cup (125 mL)

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 °F (200 °C).
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, bran cereal, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt.
3. In a separate bowl, beat eggs thoroughly. Blend in carrots, buttermilk, brown sugar, and oil. Add to dry ingredients, stirring just until moistened.
4. Stir in raisins.
5. Spoon batter into greased or paper-lined muffin cups, filling about three-quarters full.
6. Bake in preheated oven for 20 minutes or until tops of muffins spring back when lightly touched.

## Cook's Tip



\*To prepare sour milk, combine 1 Tbsp (15 mL) lemon juice or vinegar with 1 cup (250 mL) milk and let stand for 5 minutes. You can also use yogurt in place of milk.

# Carrot Soup

Makes 8 cups (16 child-sized ½ cup portions)

## What you need

Olive or canola oil	2 tsp (10 mL)
Onion	1 whole, chopped
Garlic	2 cloves, chopped
Cumin	1 tsp (5 mL)
Carrots	2 lbs (900 g) (about 12), chopped
Low-sodium or salt-free chicken or vegetable stock	6 cups (1.5 L)
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Cilantro, mint, or parsley	2 Tbsp (30 mL) chopped fresh, or ½ tsp (2.5 mL) dried

## Instructions

1. In a large saucepan, sauté onion, garlic, and cumin in oil over medium heat. Cook gently for about five minutes, or until fragrant.
2. Add stock and chopped carrots. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer gently until vegetables are very tender, about 40 minutes.
3. Purée soup using a blender, immersion blender, or potato masher. If the soup is too thick, add water. Taste and season with salt and cilantro (or alternative herb) before serving.

## Cook's Tip



Use squash and sweet potato instead of carrots. Soup is a great way to use up assorted veggies in the fridge.

# Cauliflower Popcorn

Makes 1¾ cups (5 child-sized ⅓ cup portions)

## What you need

Fresh cauliflower	3 cups (750 mL), chopped into bite-sized florets
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Turmeric or cumin (optional)	¼ tsp (1 mL)

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425 °F (220 °C).
2. Use a small knife to break cauliflower into popcorn-sized shapes. Rinse cauliflower well and pat dry.
3. Place dried cauliflower in large bowl. Add oil and spices. Toss until well coated.
4. Place on parchment-lined baking sheet and roast in oven for 25 minutes, or until cauliflower pieces are tender when pierced with a fork and golden brown.



# Creamy Squash with Apples

Makes 10 cups (20 child sized ½ cup portions)

## What you need

Acorn squash	4 large
Apples	4 large
Plain yogurt	½ cup (125 mL)
Brown sugar	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Ground ginger	1 tsp (5 mL)
Ground cinnamon	1 tsp (5 mL)
Salt	½ tsp (2.5 mL)

## Instructions

1. Wash apples and squash. Cut squash and apples in half and scoop out seeds. Pierce squash and apple skin with a fork and place in a shallow baking pan, skin side up.
2. Bake at 400 °F (200 °C) until very tender, about 1 hour.
3. Carefully remove cooked squash and apple from their peels using a spoon. Mash in a bowl using a potato masher or blender.
4. Mix in yogurt, brown sugar, ginger, cinnamon, and salt.

## Cook's Tip



For more texture, add steamed carrots to the mash. Use as a side dish or to top shepherd's pie.

# Guacamole

Makes 2 cups (6–8 child-sized portions)

## What you need

Avocados	4 medium, very ripe
Garlic	1 clove, finely chopped
Plain yogurt	½ cup (125 mL)
Lime juice	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)

## Instructions

1. Cut avocados lengthwise. Open halves and remove the pit.
2. Scoop out the avocado flesh with a spoon.
3. Mash or blend in a food processor until smooth.
4. Add remaining ingredients and blend or mash until smooth.

## Cook's Tip



Guacamole is delicious as a dip for vegetables or whole grain pita. Add fresh diced tomato, diced green or red onion, diced bell pepper, and chopped fresh cilantro to this recipe for variation, or turn it into a salad dressing by adding more yogurt to thin it out.



# Hummus

Makes 4 cups (12 child-sized ⅓ cup portions)

## What you need

Fresh garlic	2 cloves
Chickpeas	2 - 19 oz (540 mL) cans, drained and rinsed
Water	4 Tbsp (60 mL)
Lemons	3 whole, juiced
Tahini paste (optional)	3 Tbsp (45 mL)
Cumin	2 tsp (10 mL)
Olive or canola oil	¼ cup (60 mL)
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Paprika (optional to garnish)	¼ tsp (1 mL)

## Instructions

1. Peel garlic cloves and cut in half. Add garlic to food processor and pulse.
2. Drain and rinse chickpeas.
3. Add all remaining ingredients to food processor and purée until smooth. Thin with water if needed. Sprinkle with paprika (if using).

## Did you know?

Tahini paste is made from ground sesame seeds and can be found in the specialty section of most grocery stores. If tahini cannot be found, then it can be omitted.

## Cook's Tip

Experiment with other beans such as white cannellini beans instead of chickpeas. Change the flavour and colour of your classic hummus recipe by adding veggies with the beans—blend in one roasted sweet potato, one roasted red pepper, or a couple of roasted beets. This hummus is delicious in vegetable wraps and sandwiches as a spread, or it can be served as a dip with fresh veggies and whole grain pita wedges.



# Kale Salad with Yogurt Tofu Caesar Dressing

Makes 10 cups (20 child-sized ½ cup portions)

## What you need

Kale	8 cups (2 L), stems removed and leaves chopped
Salt	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Carrots	2 cups (500 mL), grated
Red onion	½ medium, sliced
Garlic	2 cloves
Silken tofu	½ cup (125 mL)
Plain yogurt	⅓ cup (80 mL)
Lemon juice	2 tsp (10 mL)
Parmesan cheese	¼ cup (60 mL), grated
Dijon mustard	1 tsp (5 mL)
Worcestershire sauce	1 tsp (5 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)

## Cook's Tip



Add chunks of avocado and whole grain croutons to this salad. You could also serve this salad with cooked leftover chicken in a whole grain wrap. **Note: Croutons may be a choking risk.**

## Instructions

1. Place washed and dried chopped kale in a large bowl and sprinkle with salt. Massage the kale for one or two minutes, until the kale has broken down and feels soft and silky.
2. Add carrots and onions. Mix to combine.
3. Place garlic in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until puréed.
4. Add remainder of ingredients and blend. If dressing is too thick, thin it with some extra-virgin olive oil.
5. Add fresh cracked black pepper.
6. Pour dressing over salad and mix until well combined. Serve cold.

# No Bake Apple Cinnamon Bites

Makes 24 bites (12 child-sized portions)

## What you need

Old-fashioned oats	2 cups (500 mL)
Cinnamon	1 tsp (5 mL)
Nutmeg	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Ground cloves	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Soy or seed based spread	½ cup (125 mL)
Sunflower seeds <i>(omit for children under 4 years of age due to choking risk)</i>	½ cup (125 mL)
Maple syrup	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Vanilla extract	1 tsp (5 mL)
Apple	1 medium, grated

## Instructions

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix until well combined.
2. Use a small ice cream scoop or your hands to make 24 balls, 1 Tbsp (15 mL) each.
3. Place in a well-sealed container in the refrigerator until ready to eat. Bites should keep up to one week or pop in the freezer.

## Cook's Tip



Replace apple with ½ cup (125 mL) pumpkin purée, and have fun with different seeds and seed butters.

# Oven Baked Sweet Potato Wedges

Makes 36 wedges  
(12 child-sized three-wedge portions)

## What you need

Sweet potatoes	4 large
Olive or canola oil	¼ cup (60 mL)
Salt	1 tsp (5 mL)
Paprika	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Pepper	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Garlic powder	½ tsp (2.5 mL)

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 °F (190 °C).
2. Wash sweet potatoes well with a scrub brush and cut into wedges.
3. In a large bowl mix oil, salt, paprika, pepper, and garlic powder.
4. Toss potatoes in a large bowl with the oil blend.
5. Bake for 30 minutes to one hour until wedges are tender when pierced with a fork.

## Cook's Tip



Leaving space between potato wedges will allow them to brown up more and not steam. You can also use this method for roasted carrots, squash, and pumpkin. Enjoy potato wedges with apple sauce or plain yogurt to dip.

# Peach Sauce

Makes 3 cups (12 child-sized ¼ cup portions)

## What you need

Frozen peaches	4 cups (1000 mL)
Water	2 cups (500 mL)
Sugar	¼ cup (60 mL)
Cornstarch	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Water	additional 3 Tbsp (45 mL)

## Instructions

1. Place peaches in a small saucepan. Add water and sugar. Heat over medium-high heat until mixture comes to a low boil and peaches soften.
2. In a separate small bowl dissolve cornstarch in 3 Tbsp of water.
3. Remove peaches from heat. Add cornstarch mixture. Stir gently until mixture thickens.
4. Purée until smooth.
5. Serve warm or cold. Delicious served on top of pancakes.





# Pico de Gallo Salsa

Makes 4 cups (16 child-sized ¼ cup portions)

## What you need

Low-sodium tomatoes	1 - 28 oz (796 mL) can, diced
White onion	1 medium onion
Cilantro (optional)	¼ cup (60 mL), chopped
Lime juice	1 Tbsp (15 mL) or ½ fresh lime
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Jalapeno pepper	1 medium, seeded and ribs removed
Red, green, orange, or yellow peppers	1 cup (250 mL), finely chopped

## Instructions

1. Wash vegetables.
2. Pour half the can of tomatoes into a blender. Add jalapeno pepper, onion, cilantro leaves, lime juice, and salt. Blend until fairly smooth.
3. Add the rest of the can of tomatoes and blend briefly.
4. Adjust seasonings to taste by adding more lime juice and salt.
5. Add sweet peppers.
6. Let the Pico de Gallo Salsa rest for 30 minutes before serving to allow the flavours to blend.

## Cook's Tip



Add black beans, corn, diced fresh tomatoes, frozen or fresh mango, cucumber, or grilled zucchini to change up the flavours. Serve Pico de Gallo Salsa with baked whole grain pita chips, or on top of a baked sweet potato with grated cheese and Greek yogurt.

# Sheet Pan Vegetable and Chicken Fajitas

Makes 20 fajitas  
(12–15 child-sized portions, 1-2 fajitas per child)

## What you need

Boneless chicken thighs	2.2 lbs (1 kg)
Sweet bell peppers	4 medium, sliced into ½ cm thick slices
Cooking onion	2 medium, thinly sliced
Limes	4 medium
Whole grain tortillas	20 small 6" tortillas (10 tortillas per package)

## FAJITA SPICE MIX

Chili powder	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Salt	1 tsp (5 mL)
Cumin	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Oregano	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Smoked paprika	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Onion powder	1½ tsp (7.5 mL)
Garlic powder	1½ tsp (7.5 mL)
Black pepper	1½ tsp (7.5 mL)

## Instructions

1. Combine all spice mix ingredients in a small bowl and mix well.
2. Marinate chicken in 3 Tbsp (45 mL) of homemade fajita spice mix for at least 1 hour (up to overnight).
3. Preheat oven to 400 °F (200 °C). Place rimmed baking sheet in the oven while it preheats.
4. In large bowl toss 1 Tbsp of seasoning with bell peppers and onions.
5. Carefully remove the hot baking sheet from the oven and spread the peppers and onions evenly across the sheet. Place in the oven and bake for 8 minutes.
6. Carefully remove the sheet from the oven. Drain off any excess liquid and add the chicken, making sure to separate the pieces of chicken from each other (to ensure they don't bake together).
7. Return to the oven and bake for 15–20 minutes or until the vegetables are roasted and chicken is cooked to an internal temperature of 165 °F (74 °C).
8. Remove pan from oven and squeeze lime juice over top of cooked chicken and veggies. Serve in whole grain tortillas with salsa, guacamole, and plain yogurt.

## Cook's Tip



Use this spice mix in black bean quesadillas, sprinkled on sweet potato wedges, or mixed in yogurt for a Tex Mex dip.

# Strawberry and Rhubarb Sauce

Makes 4 cups (12–16 child-sized  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup portions)

## What you need

Fresh strawberries	2 lbs (900 g), chopped
Rhubarb	4 stalks
Fresh orange	1 medium, juiced
Maple syrup	1 Tbsp (15 mL)

## Instructions

1. Wash and chop the rhubarb for the sauce.
2. Combine rhubarb, juice from the orange, and maple syrup in a medium pot.
3. Bring mixture to a boil and cook for 3 minutes until softened.
4. Add chopped strawberries, remove from heat, and let cool.

## Cook's Tip



Serve on top of plain yogurt or pancakes, or with cinnamon tortilla triangles. Cinnamon Tortilla Triangles: Brush 10 whole grain tortillas with a small amount of vegetable oil. Sprinkle with a mix of 1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar and 2 tsp (10 mL) of cinnamon. Cut into eighths and bake in a single layer at 350 °F (180 °C) until crisp.

# Strawberry Spinach Salad

Makes 5 cups (10 child-sized  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup portions)

## What you need

	Baby spinach	4 cups (1 L), lightly packed
	Strawberries	1 cup (250 mL), sliced
Pumpkin seeds ( <i>omit for children under 4 years of age due to choking risk</i> )		$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL), unsalted

### DRESSING

Olive or canola oil	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL)
Plain yogurt	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL)
Fresh lemon juice	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL), approximately 3 lemons
Maple syrup	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Garlic	2 cloves, minced
Dijon mustard	1 tsp (5 mL)
Salt/pepper to taste	

## Instructions

1. To prepare the dressing, combine oil, yogurt, lemon juice, maple syrup, minced garlic, Dijon mustard, and salt/pepper in a small bowl. Set aside.
2. Wash and trim spinach and place in a large salad bowl.
3. Add strawberries and pumpkin seeds (if using); toss gently.
4. Immediately before serving, drizzle with dressing.

## Cook's Tip



Use other berries or pear, apple, or drained canned Mandarins instead of strawberries. If using Mandarins, the drained juice can be used in place of fresh lemon juice in the dressing.

# Vegetable and Fish Chowder

Makes 20 cups (20 child-sized 1 cup portions)

## What you need

Onion	1 medium, diced
Carrots	2 large, diced
Zucchini	2 small, diced
Celery	4 stalks, diced
Sweet potatoes	2 medium, diced
Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Low-sodium chicken stock	8 cups (2000 mL)
Raw fish pieces	2.2 lbs (1 kg), deboned, chopped into bite-sized pieces
Evaporated milk	2 cans (354 mL each)
Corn	1 cup (250 mL), frozen
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Fresh dill	¼ bunch minced or 1 Tbsp (15 mL) dried

## Instructions

1. In a large pot, sauté all diced vegetables in oil over medium heat until soft.
2. Add chicken stock, cover with lid, and simmer for approximately 30 minutes until sweet potatoes are tender.
3. Cut fish pieces into bite-sized chunks.
4. Add fish pieces, evaporated milk, and corn to pot. Simmer until fish is cooked (about 10 minutes). Ensure chowder reaches an internal temperature of 165 °F (74 °C).
5. Season with salt and pepper. Add dill prior to serving.

## Cook's Tip



Have fun with this chowder by using different types of fish or veggies. Salmon (fresh or canned) or trout are healthy, tasty options.

# Vegetable Chana Masala

Makes 14 cups (28 child-sized ½ cup portions)

## What you need

Onion	1 large, finely chopped
Garlic cloves	3, finely chopped
Ginger	2 tsp (10 mL) or about 1 inch (2.5 cm) grated fresh ginger root
Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Garam Masala spice blend	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Cumin	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Salt	1 tsp (5 mL)
Low-sodium canned tomatoes	2 - 28 oz (796 mL) cans
Sweet potato	1, chopped
Cauliflower	4 cups (1 L), cut into small florets or 3 cups (750 mL), frozen
Green or red pepper	1, chopped
Water	
Low-sodium chickpeas	3 - 19 oz (540 mL) cans
Parsley to garnish	

## Instructions

1. Sauté onions, garlic, and ginger in oil in a large pan on a low heat. Add spices and salt and cook 1–2 minutes.
2. Add tomatoes, sweet potato, cauliflower, and green or red pepper. Gently cook for another 2 minutes. Add water if needed. Cover and let simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Add drained and rinsed chickpeas. Cook for 20 minutes until sauce thickens. Remove from heat and sprinkle with fresh parsley.

## Cook's Tip



Serve this mild curry in whole wheat tortillas or roti wraps with fresh veggies such as cucumber and sliced tomato, and plain yogurt. Another option is to serve with whole grain naan or chapattis and a salad.

# Vegetable Minestrone Soup

Makes 14 cups (28 child-sized ½ cup portions)

## What you need

Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Onion	1 large, chopped
Garlic	2 cloves, minced
Carrots	2 large, peeled and diced
Sweet potatoes	2 medium, diced
Celery	3 stalks, diced
Low-sodium diced tomatoes	1 - 28 oz (796 mL) can
Low-sodium chicken or vegetable stock	8 cups (2 L)
Dry whole grain noodles	2 cups (500 mL) (macaroni or penne)
Dried basil	1–2 tsp (5–10 mL)
Oregano	1 tsp (5 mL)
Spinach	1 bunch, chopped
Zucchini	2 small, chopped <i>(other types of squash may be substituted)</i>
Low-sodium beans	2 - 19 oz (540 mL) cans, drained and rinsed <i>(kidney, white kidney, navy, black beans, or chickpeas)</i>
Salt	¼ tsp (1 mL)
Pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL)

## Cook's Tip



Serve this soup with Veggie and Bean Quesadillas!

## Instructions

1. Heat oil in a large pot on the stovetop over medium heat. Sauté onion and garlic until softened.
2. Add carrots, potatoes, celery, tomatoes, and chicken broth. Bring to a boil and cook for 10 minutes.
3. Add pasta, dried basil, oregano, spinach, zucchini, and beans.
4. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Reduce heat to low and simmer until vegetables and pasta are cooked. If soup becomes too thick, add more stock or water.

# Veggie and Bean Quesadillas

Makes 8 small tortilla sandwiches cut into 6 wedges  
(16 child-sized portions)

## What you need

Whole grain tortillas	16 - small 6" tortillas
Cheddar cheese	3 cups (750 mL), shredded
Low-sodium black beans	1 - 19 oz (540 mL) can
Olive or canola oil	1 Tbsp (15 mL)
Red pepper	1 cup (250 mL), finely diced
Green pepper	1 cup (250 mL), finely diced
Broccoli	1 cup (250 mL), finely diced
Chili powder	1 tsp (5 mL)
Salt and pepper	¼ tsp (1 mL) each

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F (180 °C).
2. Place 8 tortillas on a large cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Sprinkle with half the cheese.
3. Drain and rinse beans.
4. Sauté red pepper, green pepper, broccoli, and beans until soft (about 5 minutes) in oil.
5. Add chili powder, salt, and pepper and sauté for 5 minutes.
6. Divide mixture evenly over tortillas.
7. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.
8. Place tortillas over vegetable mixture and cheese.
9. Bake for 10 minutes or until cheese is melted.
10. Cut into six triangles.

## Cook's Tip



Serve with another meat and alternative choice, such as a bean salad or a soup with legumes, to ensure adequate meat and alternative is offered to each child for a meal. These quesadillas are delicious with fresh Pico de Gallo Salsa and plain Greek yogurt.

# Veggie and Fish Tacos

Makes 32 tacos (16 child-sized portions, 2 tacos per child)

## What you need

Garlic powder	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Chili powder	1 tsp (5 mL)
Cumin	1 tsp (5 mL)
Dried oregano	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
White fish fillets, fresh or thawed	2.5 lbs (1.16 kg)
Olive or canola oil	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Lime	2 medium, juiced
Red cabbage	3 cups (750 mL), shredded
Salt	½ tsp (2.5 mL)
Whole grain tortillas	32 small 6" tortillas

## Cook's Tip

These tacos are delicious served with other vegetables such as grated carrots, sweet pepper strips, lettuce, salsa, and sliced or mashed avocado.

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 °F (190 °C). Grease baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Mix together all spices for seasoning blend and set aside.
3. Rinse and pat dry thawed fish. Place fillets on baking sheet. Brush the top of each fillet with olive oil. Season with seasoning blend and squeeze juice from 1 lime over the top of the fillets.
4. Bake for 15–20 minutes or until fish is opaque and flakes easily with a fork (test in the middle of the thickest piece), and internal temperature has reached 158 °F (70 °C). NOTE: Cooking time may need adjustment depending on the thickness and size of the fillets.
5. While fish is baking, prepare marinated cabbage by mixing shredded cabbage with juice of 1 lime and ½ tsp salt.
6. Warm tortillas.
7. To assemble tacos: place fish, broken up slightly, lengthwise in the middle of tortilla. Top with marinated cabbage and serve.

# Wild Rice and Blueberry Pancakes

Makes 16 pancakes  
(8 child-sized 2-pancake portions)

## What you need

Large flaked oats	1 cup (250 mL)
Whole wheat flour	1 cup (250 mL)
Baking powder	2 ½ tsp (12.5 mL)
Eggs	3 whole
Brown sugar	2 Tbsp (30 mL)
Milk	2 cups (500 mL)
Vanilla extract	1 tsp (5 mL)
Non-hydrogenated margarine	2 Tbsp (30 mL), melted
*Wild rice	½ cup (125 mL), dried or 1 ¾ cups (437 mL), cooked
Blueberries	1 cup (250 mL), fresh or frozen

## Instructions

1. Pulse oats in a blender or food processor until they are the same texture as flour.
2. Mix ground oats, whole wheat flour, and baking powder in a large bowl.
3. In a separate medium bowl, whisk eggs and sugar until blended. Add milk and vanilla and stir until combined.
4. Slowly add the milk and egg mixture into the oats and flour mixture. Don't overmix; just stir lightly until the batter is wet.
5. Using a spatula fold in melted margarine, blueberries, and cooked wild rice.
6. Spray and heat a griddle or flat pan over medium heat until hot. Ladle ¼ cup of batter for each pancake onto the griddle.
7. Let pancakes cook until bubbles stop popping in the centre of the pancake, about three minutes. Check that the bottom of the pancake is a golden colour.
8. Flip pancakes and cook for about a minute. Pancakes can be kept in a warm oven. Enjoy with peach sauce.

*\*Cook the rice the day before as this can take up to 45 minutes. Follow package instructions for cooking and refrigerate promptly.*



# Activities

These quick activities will help children explore and learn about vegetables and fruit and making healthy food choices. You can incorporate them into your daily plans. Printable versions of the activity tools are available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources).

- Activity Cards
- Vegetable and Fruit Flash Cards
- Bingo
- Memory Game
- Vegetable and Fruit Book List

The Activities have been adapted with permission from Ottawa Public Health.



## Safety Note

*For all games and activities, make sure you do not use any food items that children in your centre may be allergic to.*

# Salad Toss!

## Steps

1. Tell children you are going to pretend to make a salad.
2. One at a time, have each child call out what healthy food they would like to add to the salad.
3. After each child adds an ingredient, have children "toss" the salad by jumping, wiggling, and spinning around.

## Variations

- Follow the activity steps but make a soup. Have children "stir" the soup by spinning around.
- In the summer, have children make a fruit salad.



# Colour, Colour Everywhere

## Materials

Vegetable and fruit flash cards

## Steps

Ask these questions:

1. What is your favourite vegetable? What colour is it?
2. What is your favourite fruit? What colour is it?

## Harder

Have children cut out pictures of their favourite fruits and vegetables from magazines and make a collage to take home.



# I Love my Veggies and Fruit

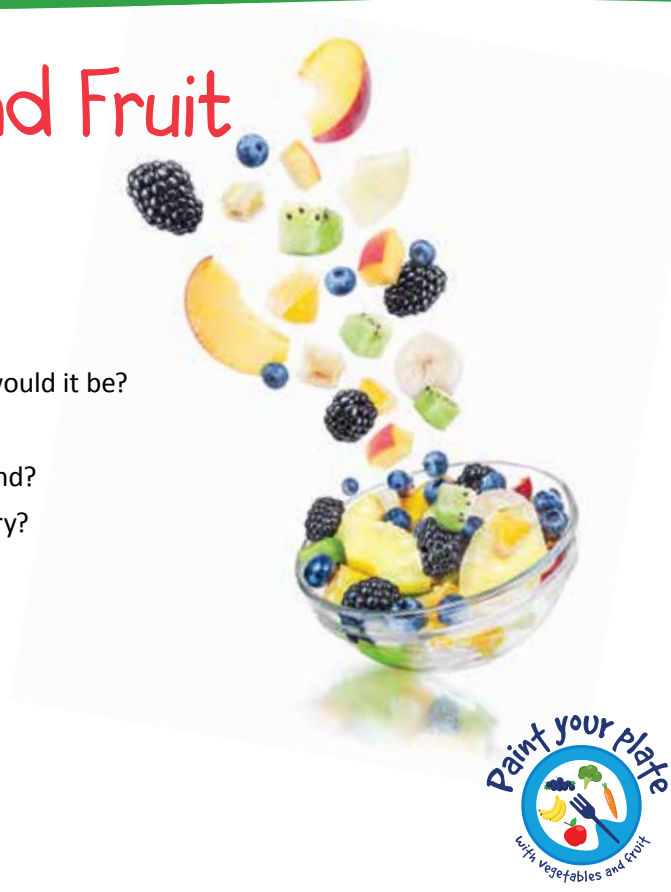
## Steps

Ask these questions:

1. If you could choose any vegetable to eat today, what would it be?
2. Is there a new vegetable you would like to try?
3. Is there a vegetable you would like to share with a friend?
4. Is there is a vegetable you would like your teacher to try?
5. Repeat the above questions with a focus on fruits.

## Easier

Ask children to name their favourite fruit or vegetable.



# Edible Art

## Materials

Plates; fruit and veggies such as strawberries (cut in half), broccoli tops, cucumber slices, apple slices, pepper slices, celery sticks, orange wedge.

## Steps

1. Give each child a mixture of ingredients to create edible art.
2. Encourage them to make shapes, faces, animals, or flowers.
3. Eat the creations!

## Variations

- Before children eat their creations, take pictures of them with their edible art. Display the pictures around the centre or in a newsletter to parents.
- Use the fruit and vegetables served that week to make the edible art.



## Safety Note

**Make sure to follow proper hand washing before and after the activity.  
Ensure foods are prepared in a way to prevent choking.**



# Mystery Box

## Materials

Small box; paper bag; different fruit and vegetables like broccoli, carrots, apples, bananas, grapes, melons, beans, mushrooms, lemons, etc.

## Steps

1. Prepare a mystery box by cutting the top off a small box. Place a single food item in the box.
2. Place the box in a paper bag so children cannot see inside.
3. Have a discussion about the five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. Relate the senses to food. For example:

- **Sight:** seeing different colours on a plate can make the food appealing
- **Smell:** our sense of smell helps us taste the different flavours in food
- **Taste:** foods have many tastes, such as sweet, sour, salty, and bitter
- **Touch:** foods can have many textures, such as crunchy and creamy
- **Sound:** hearing different sounds when we eat can make eating more interesting

4. Ask children to guess the food item in the box by touching or smelling it.

## Variation

In the morning, fill the mystery box with the vegetables and fruit that are on the menu that day.



### Safety Note

*It is not recommended that the children taste the foods that all the children have touched.*



# Make Me a Rainbow

## Materials

Coloured construction paper; tape; markers; crayons;  
Optional: vegetables and fruit flash cards

## Steps

1. Make a big rainbow from coloured construction paper and tape it to the wall where children can reach.
2. Have children draw pictures of their favourite fruit and vegetables on the matching colour on the rainbow, such as bananas on yellow and blueberries on blue.
3. Discuss the importance of eating vegetables and fruit from all the colours of the rainbow.

**Easier** Provide food pictures for younger children to glue onto the rainbow.

## Variations

- Have children draw the fruit and vegetables served that day.
- At snack time, have children make a rainbow with a variety of fresh vegetables and fruit. They can name the colours as they make their own rainbow plate.
- Make a rainbow placemat. Have children draw their favourite vegetables and fruit on coloured construction paper and laminate.





# Taste Test

## Materials

Variety of vegetables and fruit; plates; napkins

## Steps

1. Decide what foods to taste test. Here are some ideas:
  - Apples: red, green, yellow
  - Grapes: red, green, purple
  - Bell peppers: red, orange, green, yellow
  - Vegetables: turnip, squash, Brussels sprouts, sweet potato, snap peas
2. Cut the foods into bite-sized pieces.
3. Have children choose which foods they want to taste test. Do not pressure children to try foods.
4. Ask which foods were sweet, sour, crunchy, etc.



## Variation

In the morning, have children taste test the vegetables and fruit that will be served for lunch that day.



### Safety Note

***Make sure to follow proper hand washing before and after the activity.  
Ensure foods are prepared in a way to prevent choking.***



# Make a Match

## Materials

Pictures of vegetables and fruit; tape

## Steps

1. Cut out large pictures of different vegetables and fruit from grocery store flyers.
2. Stick the pictures on the walls around the classroom.
3. Call out the names of the vegetable and fruit pictures on the wall one at a time and ask children to walk over and stand beside that picture.

## Easier

1. Cut out two pictures of each vegetable and fruit.
2. Stick the pictures on the walls around the classroom.
3. Call out the names of the vegetable and fruit pictures on the wall one at a time and ask children to walk over and stand beside that picture.

## Variations

- Ask children to run, jump, or hop to the food picture on the wall.
- Ask children to name a food served that day that is a fruit and a vegetable.
- Ask children to name the vegetables or fruit served from different colour categories.





# Fruit Show and Tell

## Materials

Optional: pictures of healthy foods

## Steps

1. Ask children to bring in a picture of their favourite fruit.
2. Have children stand in a circle.
3. Have children take turns to show and tell their favourite fruit.

## Harder

Have children draw their own pictures of their favourite fruits and vegetables for show and tell.

## Variations

- Provide children with cut-out pictures of foods that they can choose from to show and tell.



# Veggie and Fruit Scavenger Hunt

## Materials

Pictures of vegetables (and other healthy foods) or pictures from flash cards; one bucket for each child

## Steps

1. Cut out pictures of vegetables and fruit from grocery store flyers or use provided flash cards.
2. Hide the pictures around the classroom.
3. Give each child a bucket.
4. Have children find as many vegetables and fruit as they can.
5. Once all children have found some pictures, have them sort the pictures into one pile for vegetables and another pile for fruit.
6. Have children stand together in a circle, hold up the vegetables and fruit they found, and name them.



# Mix it up

## Materials

Fruit cut into bite-sized pieces; one small bowl per child; one large bowl; spoons; napkins



## Steps

1. Cut fruit into bite-sized pieces and put into small bowls.  
Put one type of fruit in each bowl.
2. Give one small bowl to each child.
3. Pass around the large bowl and ask each child to add an ingredient from their individual bowl to the large bowl.
4. Toss the fruit salad and give some to each child.

## Variations

- Do the same with vegetables to make a vegetable salad.
- In the summer, take the salad outside and have a picnic.
- Use seasonal fruit and vegetables.



### Safety Note

*Make sure to follow proper hand washing before and after the activity.  
Ensure foods are prepared in a way to prevent choking.*



# Find Food Fun!

## Materials

Fruit and vegetables flash cards

## Steps

1. Make flash cards by gluing pictures of healthy foods onto construction paper or use provided flash cards.
2. Have children stand together in a circle.
3. Display one flash card at a time and ask these questions:
  - What food is this?
  - What colour is it?
4. Once children have answered the questions, ask them to jump up and down if they like to eat that food.

## Harder

Ask children what letter the food starts with.

## Variation

Vary the physical activity movements in response to the question (Do you like to eat the food?), such as standing on one foot or stretching to reach the sky.



# How Does Your Garden Grow?

## Materials

Recycled individual sized yogurt containers or plastic cups (one per child); black earth; tomato plant seeds or other vegetable seeds that grow quickly; cookie sheet or tray

## Steps

1. Write each child's name on one of the yogurt containers or cups.
2. Poke a hole in the bottom of each container.
3. Fill each container with black earth.
4. Have each child plant a seed or two in their container.
5. Place the containers on a cookie sheet or tray for drainage.
6. Water and place in an area with some sun exposure.
7. Help children water the plants as needed.
8. Monitor the plants as they sprout and discuss how vegetables grow.



## Safety Note

**Do not grow raw sprouts (e.g., alfalfa, bean, clover, radish, and mung beans).**

## Variation

If you have sprouted plants in the spring or early summer, fill some large clay pots with black earth. Have children help you transfer their seedlings to the clay pots. Watch the plants as they grow and vegetables start to appear. Help children pick the vegetables and let them eat what they have grown.



# Vegetable and Fruit Flash Cards

Use these flash cards to play games and do activities promoting brightly coloured vegetables and fruit!  
Printable versions available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)



turnip



pineapple



asparagus



blackberries



squash



red pepper



## Instructions for Playing BINGO.

Fruit and vegetable cards; tokens or chips.  
Printable versions are available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)

1. Shuffle the vegetable and fruit flash cards and place them in a stack face down.
2. One at a time, have children turn over a card and call out the name of the vegetable/fruit.
3. Children who have the matching vegetable/fruit on their BINGO card place a chip on top of the picture on their card.
4. Continue turning over cards from the stack until one player has all of their squares covered.





# Memory Game

## Instructions for Playing the Memory Game

### Materials

Fruit and vegetable memory game cards. Printable versions are available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)

### Steps

1. Shuffle the cards and place them face down on the table or floor. Spread them out in rows or in random order.
2. Have children take turns flipping over two cards. If the colours don't match, place the cards face down in their original position. If they do match, the player keeps the cards.
3. Continue taking turns flipping cards until all matches are found.



# Vegetable and Fruit Book List

Book	Author	Description
<b>Blueberries for Sal</b>	Robert McCloskey	Shows young children where fruits and vegetables come from and can be a valuable resource for parents to use to explain the source of some foods. The book features a little girl, Sal, and her mother as they pick blueberries for winter.
<b>D.W. the Picky Eater</b>	Marc Brown	Shows what can happen when a picky eater ends up loving the one vegetable she hates the most—spinach! This book is fun to read and discusses how to respect children's eating preferences.
<b>Eating the Alphabet</b>	Lois Ehlert	Helps children learn about the different types of fruits and vegetables available, while also helping them learn their ABCs.
<b>Garbage Helps Our Garden Grow: A Compost Story</b>	Linda Glaser	Describes how one family makes compost for their garden and teaches how to start your own compost bin. Banana peels, grass clippings, and even an old jack-o'-lantern go in the compost bin, and out comes compost. The compost goes into the garden to make the soil rich for new plants.
<b>Go, Go, Grapes!</b>	April Pulley Sayre	Teaches young children about the names for different fruits. Includes colourful pictures.
<b>Growing Vegetable Soup</b>	Lois Ehlert	Encourages children to eat a variety of vegetables, grow their own food, and enjoy them with family. This book describes how a father and a child grow a variety of vegetables together in their own garden to make a vegetable soup.
<b>How a Seed Grows</b>	Helene J. Jordan	Shows how seeds grow into plants and trees. The book helps children learn simple steps for turning seeds into their own garden.
<b>How Do Apples Grow?</b>	Betsy Maestro	Takes young readers on a trip to an apple orchard, describing how apples mature from bud to blossom to juicy fruit. The book also discusses fertilization and pollination and includes diagrams.
<b>How Groundhog's Garden Grew</b>	Lynne Cherry	Teaches children about the interplay among all living things, and the good feeling that comes with community participation and sharing. When hungry Little Groundhog tries to eat some vegetables out of Squirrel's garden, kind Squirrel takes him under his proverbial wing and shows him how to plant his own veggies.
<b>I Really Like Slop</b>	Mo Willems	Encourages young children to try new foods that may be unfamiliar to them. In the book, two friends enjoy different kinds of foods. Piggie encourages Gerald the elephant to try some of his "slop," a popular meal in his culture.
<b>Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!</b>	Candace Fleming	Encourages young children to eat a variety of vegetables like lettuce, carrots, peas, and tomatoes. After planting his long-awaited garden full of delicious foods, Mr. McGreely looks for a solution for the bunnies that are eating his crops.
<b>One Bean</b>	Anne Rockwell	Shows the progress of a bean as a boy soaks it, plants it, waters it, re-pots it, and watches more beans grow.
<b>One Watermelon Seed</b>	Celia B. Lottridge	Teaches children what produce can be grown in their own backyard, such as watermelons, tomatoes, and corn. Along with being a great counting book for children, it also helps them see where their fruits and vegetables come from.
<b>Plant a Little Seed</b>	Bonnie Christensen	Shows how with a little help from a watering can, bright sunlight, and a lot of patience, seeds in a community garden grow into sprouts, which grow into stems, followed by leaves and buds. The garden will soon be teeming with life and ready for a harvest season celebration.

Book	Author	Description
<b>Rah, Rah, Radishes!</b>	April Pulley Sayre	Teaches children about the different types of vegetables available. This fun read-aloud book for young children has high-quality photos that whet the appetite.
<b>Rainbow Stew</b>	Cathryn Falwell	Shows all the ingredients that can be sliced, chopped, peeled, and diced for a great big pot of mouth-watering Rainbow Stew. Delicious ingredients include yellow peppers, purple cabbage, red tomatoes, green zucchini, orange carrots, and more.
<b>The Carrot Seed</b>	Ruth Krauss	Demonstrates how patience and perseverance can yield wonderful and tasty results. This classic children's book focusses on carrots, gardening, and hard work.
<b>The Enormous Turnip</b>	Kathy Parkinson	Describes what happens when a very, very large turnip doesn't want to be pulled out of the ground.
<b>The Pumpkin Book</b>	Gail Gibbons	Teaches children how pumpkins grow, along with their traditional uses and cultural significance.
<b>Today is Monday</b>	Eric Carle	Introduces young children (and their parents) to the variety of different foods they can eat during the week, all the while encouraging eating with others, listening to hunger cues, and eating non-processed foods.
<b>What's for Lunch</b>	Sarah L. Thomson	Encourages children to eat a variety of different vegetables and fruits, while also reminding them to drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages. Colourful illustrations show the different food groups and the healthy foods that fall into each group.
<b>What's so Yummy? All About Eating Well and Feeling Good</b>	Robie H. Harris	Offers both children and adults a fun and educational read about many different topics in healthy eating and nutrition, such as a balanced diet, hunger cues, and allergies, as well as food security initiatives.

The above book descriptions provided by Ottawa Public Health, various book publishers, and book-selling websites.

# Supporting and Engaging Families

## Promote Paint Your Plate

Families play a key role in shaping children's eating habits. Involve parents and caregivers in Paint Your Plate by encouraging them to offer more brightly coloured vegetables and fruit in the home. Share practical healthy eating tips, tools, and resources to create awareness of the benefits of eating brightly coloured vegetables and fruit and easy ways to add them to meals and snacks by running a Paint Your Plate campaign. Printable versions of the resources are available at [odph.ca/child-care-resources](http://odph.ca/child-care-resources)

### Activity ideas:

- Display the Paint Your Plate posters in the halls, in each classroom, and at the entrance to the child care centre.
- Post the Paint Your Plate entrance sign at the entrance to make visitors aware that the centre is running a Paint Your Plate campaign.
- Display the page sized vegetable and fruit fact sheets for parents to take home. Post the sheets beside your menu.
- Display copies of the seasonal recipes or share with families.
- Share pictures of vegetable and fruit activities with parents in a centre scrapbook or yearbook.
- Make vegetables and fruit part of the centre's learning stations, games, and activities. Have a registered dietitian offer a short workshop to launch the campaign to help teachers feel comfortable with campaign materials and tools.
- Insert the short, formatted Paint Your Plate seasonal newsletters in bulletins for families. These seasonal newsletters feature quick and easy ways to include more vegetables and fruit in meals and snacks.

## Entrance Sign

Display these signs above or on your entrance door or use as a bulletin board header.



17" x 11"



24" x 12"

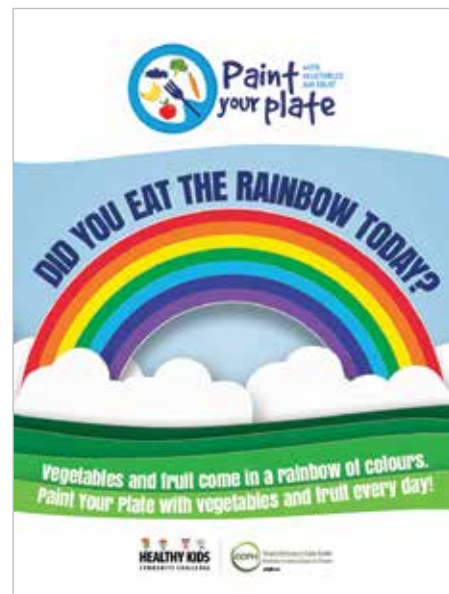


36" x 18"



# Posters

Display these posters in common areas where children, child care providers, and family gather.





# Paint Your Plate Newsletter Inserts

## To introduce the campaign:

### **GREAT NEWS!**

Our child care centre is offering the Paint Your Plate Vegetables and Fruit program. This means we will be serving brightly coloured vegetables and fruit at all meals and snacks to boost children's intake of these nourishing foods.

Canadian children eat less than the recommended five servings a day of vegetables and fruit. Eating plenty of vegetables and fruit gives kids vitamins, minerals, fibre, and nutrients. This helps them to grow, do better in school, play sports, and enjoy other activities.

**Our menus will feature a colourful range of vegetables and fruit. Your child will:**


- explore different vegetables and fruit at meals and snacks
- learn about new vegetables and fruit: how they taste and smell, how they're grown, and how to prepare and cook them
- be more likely to meet their recommended vegetable and fruit intake
- learn about food by participating in activities and watching their peers, educators, and friends

We will use fun, creative activities to help kids learn about new vegetables and fruit. We will also have colourful resources for families displayed throughout the centre. We want to share this great program with you so stay tuned for more information. Together we can learn to Paint Your Plate.

***Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!***


# Paint Your Plate Seasonal Newsletter Inserts

## Winter



Did you know that more bananas are eaten around the world than any other fruit? There are over 500 different types of bananas. If you eat a different kind every day, it would still take you almost a year and a half to try every type. Enjoy them at meals or for a quick snack on the run. One of the tastiest ways to enjoy bananas is in a fruit smoothie. Blend one banana, a small container of yogurt, and a ½ cup of frozen berries for a lip-smacking drink!

***Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!***





Did you know that a clementine orange is also called the “zipper orange” because it is so easy to peel? Clementine oranges are a good source of vitamin C. Vitamin C keeps your bones, teeth, blood, muscles and gums healthy. Kiwis, strawberries, and cantaloupe also have vitamin C. Clementine oranges are a quick and tasty mid-morning snack.

***Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!***





Are you looking for a way to make lunch more interesting? Colour theme it! Choose a colour and only pack items that are that colour. Here's how it works. For an outrageous orange lunch, choose a grated cheese pita pocket, orange pepper slices and carrot sticks, and peach yogurt.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Did you know that a pineapple can weigh up to 9 kg? Pineapples are part of a healthy diet and are full of vitamins and minerals. In the winter, try juicy canned pineapple—in spears or chunks. Buy canned pineapple packed in water or its own juice (drained), not in sugar syrup. Eating less sugar helps keep your teeth healthy. Are you eating enough vegetables and fruit?

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Which food group has all the colours of the rainbow? Try to eat vegetables and fruit from the five colour groups every day to keep your heart healthy. Go for green peas or beans, yellow-orange squash or peaches, red peppers or pink grapefruit, blueberries, green peppers, and white cauliflower or pears. How many colours can you add to your meals and snacks?

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Fruit-flavoured snacks, in strips or rolls, are candy in disguise and contain very little real fruit. Instead, these products are mostly sugar, artificial flavours and colours, and preservatives. Manufacturers add phrases like “real fruit” on the label to make the product seem healthy. Be sure to read the ingredient list and look for added sugar. Enjoy fruit every day, and save the candy for a special “sometimes” treat.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Which do you think is the healthiest? Peeled baby carrots or regular ones? Baby carrots pack the same nutritional punch as the bigger version. Both are an excellent source of beta carotene and vitamin A, which are good for your eyes, skin, and growing bones. Do you serve carrots at meals and snacks?

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*





# Spring/Summer



Serve or pack raw veggies and fresh fruit for an easy, crunchy snack. Many veggies and fruit taste great raw with a yummy dip or dressing on top. Use low-fat ranch dip for baby carrots, celery sticks, or cucumber slices. For dessert, nothing beats berries, bananas, or apple slices dipped in vanilla yogurt.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Did you know that one strawberry has about 200 seeds? They are the only fruit that have their seeds on the outside! Strawberries are a great source of vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C. Strawberries make a delicious and healthy snack. Serve them plain or on top of cereal or yogurt.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Have you enjoyed a tomato lately? Add tomatoes to homemade pasta sauces, casseroles, soups, or salsa. Layer them with veggies like lettuce or cucumber on a sandwich. Pack a few cherry or grape tomatoes in your lunch for a juicy burst of flavour. Do you have a tomato in your lunch today?

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Which fruit is 88 percent water and chockfull of nutrients? Watermelon ... the perfect treat on a hot summer day. Watermelon is an excellent source of both vitamins A and C.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*





Have you ever wondered why apples float? Apples float because they contain 25 percent air. Apples also contain fibre. It is important for children to eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruit daily to reach their fibre needs. Fibre helps keep your blood healthy and gives your digestive system a workout!

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Did you know that early settlers in North America made grey paint by boiling blueberries and milk together? Blueberries and milk also make a great addition to a snack. For breakfast, throw a handful of blueberries into pancakes or muffins or add blueberries to cereal. This colourful start to the day puts kids well on their way to getting enough vegetables and fruit.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Did you know that different coloured vegetables and fruit are higher in different nutrients? Children need a variety of vegetables and fruit of all colours to be healthy and active. Foods like chocolate bars, chips, and pop are high in sugar, fat, and/or salt and don't offer the nutrients children need. These foods should only be eaten sometimes. Try eating vegetables and fruit at every meal and snack and keep the "sometimes" foods for a special treat!

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Did you know that green peppers have twice as much vitamin C as oranges? Red and yellow peppers have four times more vitamin C than oranges! Vegetables and fruit are a great source of vitamin C. Vitamin C may help heal cuts and wounds and protect from cancer. Be sure your child gets at least five servings of vegetables and fruit each day to get enough vitamin C.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Looking to kick off fall in a healthy way? Aim for your little ones to eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruit every day. How big is a serving? Crunch a juicy apple, munch on a handful of baby carrots or yummy grapes, or eat a cup of salad greens. Vegetables and fruit are filled with vitamins and minerals that help bodies to grow and brains to learn.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



Did you know that some pumpkins can grow to over 363 kg? That's as big as a grizzly bear! These pumpkins grow almost 7 kg each day. Children's bodies don't grow that fast, but they do grow every day, even into their 20s. Make sure your children grow healthy and strong by following *Canada's Food Guide* and including at least five servings of vegetables and fruit every day.

*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*







# newsletter

## Paint Your Plate with Veggies and Fruit

Dear Parents,

**This week your child will explore a rainbow of vegetables and fruit. Vegetables and fruit come in a variety of different colours—red, yellow/orange, green, blue/purple, and white/tan/brown. We will be promoting these messages:**

- Offer at least one dark green vegetable (e.g., broccoli, romaine lettuce, green peas, spinach) and one orange vegetable or fruit (e.g., sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, cantaloupe, peaches) each day. But don't stop there!
- Go for red cherries and strawberries, blueberries and purple grapes, yellow peppers and squash, and brown pears and white parsnips. Different coloured vegetables or fruit give your body different nutrients each day.
- Serve vegetables or fruit at each meal or snack. Let your child decide how much to eat.

**You can boost vegetables and fruit at home too. Try these tips for success:**

- Start early. Introduce vegetables and fruit to children when they are young.
- Offer small amounts and be patient. Give children time to become familiar with different flavours and textures. Offer vegetables and fruit cut into different shapes (e.g., sticks or cubes), or serve them raw or cooked, crunchy or softer, to increase interest.
- Be prepared. Keep a supply of washed and cut vegetables and fruit in the fridge for easy snacking.
- Pack them up. Bring washed and cut vegetables and fruit with you on road trips or for after sports practice.
- Make a trade. Swap a side of fries with veggie sticks, salad, or fruit when eating out.
- Add them in. Add extra vegetables to homemade and prepared foods, such as adding frozen mixed vegetables to a macaroni beef casserole. Smoothies are another great way to add in more vegetables and fruit.

**Stop by the centre for Paint Your Plate factsheets with tips on eating more vegetables and fruit. Together we can help children enjoy eating vegetables and fruit for a lifetime.**



***Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!***





# newsletter

Eat—Don't Drink—Your Veggies and Fruit

Dear Parents,

As part of the Paint Your Plate program, we are reviewing our menus to make sure we are offering the healthiest options.

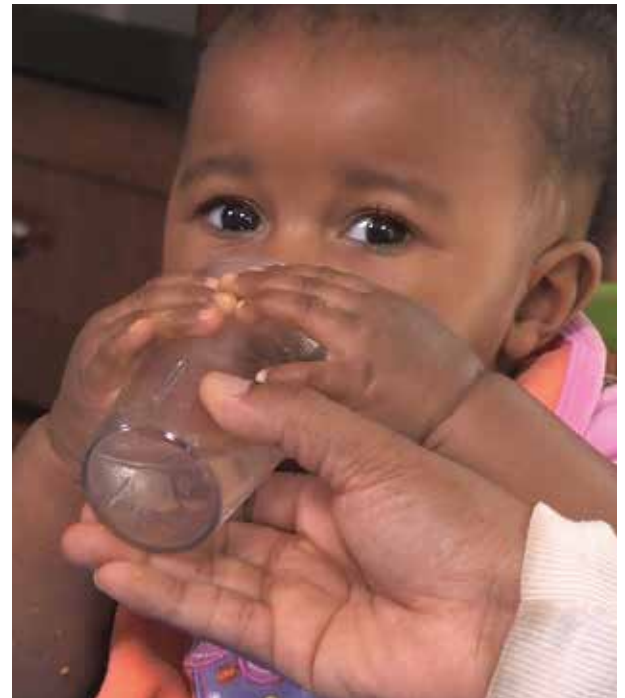
Drinks with added sugars provide little nutrition for growing children and can cause dental decay. Sugary drinks also can fill children up and bump out healthy drinks such as water or plain milk. We will not be serving sugary drinks at the centre.

We will serve water and plain milk during snack and mealtimes. Water will be available throughout the day, and we will remind children to drink, especially during hot weather or while being physically active. We will serve fresh, frozen, and canned fruit and vegetables, which have more fibre and nutrition than juice.

Infants, toddlers, and children do not need juice. It's best to eat vegetables and fruits instead of drinking them. If you do offer juice at home, Health Canada recommends limiting to no more than ½ cup (125 mL) of 100% juice per day.

We encourage parents and caregivers to **avoid** serving these sugary drinks:

- 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice
- Sweetened fruit juice
- Flavoured milks such as chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, or milkshakes
- Fruit-flavoured drinks such as fruit punch or cocktail
- Pop
- Sports drinks
- Flavoured or fortified (i.e., added vitamins) waters



*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



# newsletter

## Paint Your Plate with Super Snacks!

Dear Parents,

**This week we're focussing on super snacking. Our key message is to choose healthy snacks that include at least one brightly coloured vegetable or fruit.**

For kids, healthy snacks are not only enjoyable, they are also necessary. Kids have small stomachs and they need regular snacks that pack a nutritious punch.

### **What makes a healthy snack?**

- Include a vegetable or fruit with every snack. Then add another choice from one of the other three food groups in Canada's Food Guide: Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, or Meat and Alternatives.
- Keep less healthy foods such as candy, cookies, and chips as an occasional treat.

### **How much snacking is okay?**

- A good rule of thumb is to provide three regular meals a day, with snacks in between as needed.

### **Super snack ideas:**

- apple slices and cheese cubes
- diced peaches with plain yogurt
- carrot and celery sticks with hummus dip
- unsweetened applesauce and whole grain crackers
- orange slices and hard-boiled egg
- raspberries/bananas/blueberries with whole grain cereal and plain milk

**Thanks for supporting the Paint Your Plate program. We are encouraging children to learn more about new vegetables and fruit. Stay tuned for more tips and tools to help make vegetables and fruit the easy choices.**



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***Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!***



# newsletter

## Paint Your Plate at Breakfast!

Dear Parents,

**The Paint Your Plate program is in full swing.**

Each day children are having fun learning about the taste, smell, texture, feel, and sound of a new vegetable or fruit.

Breakfast gives children the energy and nutrients they need to start the day. It's also an easy time to add a serving or two of vegetables and fruit.



### Ideas for vegetables and fruit at breakfast:

- Offer colourful fresh fruit in season. Chop them the day before to save time.
- Top whole grain cereal with sliced bananas, kiwi, or fresh berries.
- Add fresh or frozen berries to pancake batter or top pancakes with sliced peaches.
- Top half a whole grain bagel with apple slices, a sprinkle of cinnamon, and a slice of cheddar cheese. Broil until the cheese melts.
- Serve up a breakfast smoothie. Blend yogurt, frozen berries, avocado, leafy greens (e.g., spinach, kale), and a small amount of milk.
- Add frozen or fresh chopped bell peppers, broccoli, spinach, mushrooms, or tomatoes to eggs and omelettes.
- Top half a whole grain English muffin with nut or seed spread and sliced strawberries and bananas. Use a tortilla instead for a tasty roll-up.



***Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!***



# newsletter

## Paint Your Plate at Lunch!

Dear Parents,

The centre continues to promote the Paint Your Plate program. Our goal is to make it easier for families to eat vegetables and fruit to protect against heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and many cancers. By eating more vegetables and fruit, children get more of the nutrients, fibre, and energy they need to grow, learn, play, and be healthy.

Families are also important role models—children learn by watching how often vegetables and fruit are served and eaten at home.

Here are some ways to boost veggies and fruit at lunch, whether at school or at work:

- Make an easy tuna toss. Top romaine lettuce with flaked tuna, quartered cherry tomatoes, sliced black olives, onions, and red and yellow peppers. Pack a small container of balsamic dressing for a tasty topper.
- Top whole wheat pasta with pesto or tomato sauce, and add a side of veggie sticks.
- Chop, slice, and dice assorted vegetables (e.g., carrot, zucchini, and celery sticks; red and green pepper strips; broccoli and cauliflower tops; mushroom caps; and cherry tomatoes). Serve with a tasty dip.
- Stuff mini pita pockets with thin apples slices, romaine lettuce, and shredded cheese.
- Dip sliced sweet potato in a mixture of egg whites and nutmeg. Bake on a lightly greased pan in a 425 °F (220 °C) oven for 20 minutes.
- Add grated apples, diced pears, or sliced grapes to jazz up coleslaw.
- Add blueberries, sliced strawberries, or mandarin oranges to green salads.
- Top homemade pizza with zucchini slices, mushrooms, onions, red or orange pepper strips, shredded carrots, chopped spinach, and diced tomatoes.
- Add extra fresh or frozen vegetables to spaghetti sauce, chili, lasagna, casseroles, or stews.
- Stuff whole wheat pita pockets with shredded cheese, cubed meat, diced tomato, and cucumber.



*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*





# newsletter

## Paint Your Plate at Dinner!

Dear Parents,

Vegetables and fruit are good for the whole family. With a little planning and preparation, it is easy to add vegetables and fruit to your dinner time meals.



### Paint Your Plate at dinner:

- Aim to have at least half the dinner plate covered with vegetables.
- Serve low-sodium soup—tomato, vegetable, minestrone.
- Save time with salad-in-a-bag.
- Add a side salad—bean, coleslaw, or leafy green are great choices.
- Stir fry chopped onions, snap peas, broccoli, and cauliflower. Serve with brown rice, whole grain bulgur, or couscous. Add fruit such as pineapple, mango, or kiwi for a tasty twist.
- Get grilling! Use firm, ripe produce such as eggplant, leeks, zucchini, green and red peppers, mushrooms, squash, or corn on the cob. To prevent sticking, lightly baste with vegetable oil or a non-stick spray.
- Top your homemade pizza with zucchini or squash slices, mushrooms, onions, green or red pepper strips, marinated artichoke hearts, broccoli florets, shredded carrots, fresh tomato slices, chopped spinach, or even fruit, like pineapple.
- Add extra fresh or frozen veggies to your favourite spaghetti sauce, chili, lasagna, casserole, or stew.



*Paint Your Plate with vegetables and fruit!*



# PAINT YOUR PLATE

## While at Play



Some children spend a lot of time at sporting games and practices, clubs, and other activities. They need water for healthy hydration, and afterwards they may be hungry and need a healthy snack to refuel. Providing nourishing options for post-activity snacking makes it clear that healthy eating and physical activity go hand in hand.

Brightly coloured, fresh vegetables and fruit that are washed, cut up, and ready to eat are the best options. Kids can't resist!

### Try:

- Apples
- Oranges
- Watermelon
- Grapes
- Cherries
- Kiwi
- Pears
- Peaches
- Cantaloupe
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Bananas
- Pineapple
- Sugar snap peas
- Mango
- Cucumbers
- Cherry tomatoes
- Clementines
- Plums
- Nectarines
- Carrots
- Peppers
- Celery
- Honey dew Melon
- Apricots

**TO PREVENT CHOKING IN CHILDREN UNDER 4 YEARS OF AGE, CUT VEGETABLES AND FRUIT LENGTHWISE (E.G., GRAPES), FINELY CHOP (E.G., CELERY, PINEAPPLE) OR CUT IN BITE SIZED PIECES.**





# CELEBRATE THE Paint Your Plate Way

We often eat birthday cake, ice cream, hot dogs, and other less nutritious choices for special events and celebrations. After, all it's only a "treat." Healthy eating patterns include the occasional treat. But think about how often children really have treats. Are they eating treats every day? Or even several times throughout their day? Having treats too often bumps out the healthier foods that give kids the nutrients they need to be healthy and grow.

Healthy foods can also be fun foods to enjoy during special occasions.

## Be the hit of the party with Watermelon Fruit Pizza!



### Ingredients:

- 1 whole watermelon
- 2–3 cups (500–750 mL) strawberries, sliced
- 1 sprig fresh mint
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) vanilla
- 2 cups (500 g container) Greek yogurt
- 1 cup (250 mL) blackberries
- 1 cup (250 mL) blueberries

### Instructions:

1. Carefully cut the watermelon into one or more 1-inch round slabs.
2. Slice about five strawberries for each pizza you plan to make. Chop the mint.
3. Combine vanilla and Greek yogurt.
4. Spread yogurt on the watermelon "crust"; top with berries and mint.
5. Cut each pizza into eight equal slices and serve immediately.

### Birthday loot bags or prize ideas:

- |                     |                   |                     |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| • stickers          | • erasers         | • medals or ribbons |
| • sidewalk chalk    | • crayons         | • spinning tops     |
| • bubbles           | • colouring books | • Slinkies          |
| • fun shaped straws | • craft materials |                     |
| • pencils           | • finger puppets  |                     |

### Olympian Fruit Freezes

Makes 8 servings

#### Ingredients:

- 250 mL (1 cup) lemon yogurt
- 2 cups (500 mL) seedless watermelon, cubed
- 1 pint fresh strawberries, tops removed
- 1 medium banana, peeled and sliced
- 8 paper cups
- 8 plastic spoons

#### Instructions:

1. Place yogurt and fruit in a blender container. Cover tightly.
2. Blend until smooth. Pour into paper cups.
3. Freeze until thick and slushy, about 1 hour. Insert a spoon, handle up, into each cup of frozen fruit mixture. Return to freezer and freeze until solid, at least 2 hours.
4. To serve, remove from freezer and let sit for about 10 minutes. Peel paper cup off each treat and eat, using the spoon as a handle.







# WAYS TO EXPOSE CHILDREN TO Vegetables and Fruit



- Involve your children in shopping, choosing, and preparing vegetables and fruit. Children are more likely to eat the foods they helped prepare.
- Use fun, easy-to-open containers for packed lunches. Let children fill them with the veggies or fruit of their choice.
- Keep vegetables and fruit visible. Have a bowl on the counter with fresh fruit such as apples, oranges, or bananas. Refrigerate cut-up vegetables and fruit in reusable containers for ready-to-go snacks.
- Serve a new vegetable or fruit along with a familiar one that your child likes. Consider adding a tasty, nutritious dip such as hummus, guacamole, or plain yogurt.
- Change it up. Toss some blueberries in with the usual apple slices or serve mixed frozen vegetables instead of a single veggie (e.g., green peas). Exposing children to a variety of vegetables and fruit helps them become familiar with different flavours and textures.
- Practise patience! Children may need to see a new food 10–15 times before tasting it. Keep offering new vegetables or fruit at meal and snack times without any pressure, coaxing, or rewarding.
- Set regular meal and snack times so children are hungry and ready to eat. Offer only water between meals and snacks.
- Be a positive role model. Children will follow your example. They are more likely to eat a variety of vegetables and fruit if they see you enjoying them on a regular basis.

## SAVVY SOLUTIONS TO SPECIAL CHALLENGES:

- Save on prep time. Use pre-packaged fresh, frozen, or canned veggies and fruit, or buy salad-in-a-bag.
- Be smart about storage. To extend the shelf life of your produce, use storage tips from the Canadian Produce Marketing Association at [cpma.ca](http://cpma.ca)
- Make it a priority. Once a week take an hour to wash, peel, or chop vegetables for quick access as needed.
- Avoid waste. Make a weekly menu and buy the amount of vegetables and fruit you need for each meal and snack. Rework any leftovers into the next meal or snack (e.g., toss leftover veggies into an omelette, salad, or pasta). Stock up on frozen or canned vegetables and fruit as a backup if you run out of fresh produce.
- Save money by reading the weekly flyers for sales or coupons for vegetables and fruit. Buy local or in-season produce. Include frozen and canned vegetables and fruit; they can be cheaper, especially in the winter, and last longer than fresh produce.
- Enjoy fresh, local vegetables and fruit that are available all year long. To see when vegetables and fruits are in season, visit Foodland Ontario at [ontario.ca/foodland](http://ontario.ca/foodland)
- Remove the competition. Make sure your kids aren't filling up on chips, cookies, and sugary drinks between meals and snacks. Keep healthy choices on hand for fast and easy snacking, such fruit or veggie sticks and hummus.





## DID YOU KNOW?

# Kids Don't Need Juice!



Kids don't need drinks with added sugars. Even 100% unsweetened fruit juice is still a sugary drink. Sugary drinks offer little nutrition for growing bodies, and they can cause dental decay and erosion. They can also fill children's stomachs and bump out healthy drinks, meals, and snacks.

Plain water, milk, or plain fortified soy beverage are the best choices for children (and adults!). Remember that children need more water when they are physically active, and in warmer weather.

## What drinks have sugar?

- 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice
- sweetened fruit juice
- flavoured milks such as chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, or milkshakes
- fruit-flavoured drinks such as fruit punch or cocktail
- pop
- sports drinks
- flavoured or fortified (i.e., added vitamins) waters

**Encourage children to eat their veggies and fruit, and quench their thirst with water.**



# PAINT YOUR PLATE: Every Meal and Snack Matters!



Veggies and fruit are good for you and your children. With a little planning and preparation, it's easy to add vegetables and fruit to breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack time.

Try these ideas to Paint Your Plate every meal of the day.

## Add them in:

- Top whole grain cereal with sliced bananas, kiwi, or fresh berries.
- Add fresh or frozen berries to pancake batter or top pancakes with sliced peaches.
- Stuff mini pita pockets with thin apples slices, romaine lettuce, and shredded cheese.
- Add grated apples, diced pears, or sliced grapes to jazz up coleslaw.
- Add blueberries, sliced strawberries, or mandarin oranges to green salads.
- Add salad sides—bean, coleslaw, or leafy green are great choices.

## Save time:

- Add frozen or fresh chopped vegetables such as bell peppers, broccoli, spinach, mushrooms, or tomatoes to eggs and omelettes.
- Add fresh or frozen vegetables to spaghetti sauce, chili, lasagna, casseroles, or stews.
- Top baked beans with shredded lettuce, grated carrots, and grated cheese.
- Save time with salad-in-a-bag.
- Offer colourful fresh fruit in season, chopped the day before to save time.



# Role Modelling



Families and child care providers help children develop healthy eating habits when they model healthy eating behaviours and positive body image. Children are more likely to eat colourful vegetables and fruit and other healthy foods and drinks when they see others eating and enjoying them.

Children are always watching and listening. What child care providers say and do have a significant impact on what children see as “normal.”

**Whether you mean to or not, your actions, attitudes, words, and behaviours influence children’s food choices, food behaviours, and body image.**

Child care providers’ and families’ attitudes toward healthy living, as well as their food choices, truly influence children’s lifestyle and nutrition habits. When children see that their caregivers value healthy eating, they may also begin to see the importance of making healthy food choices. However, the reverse is also true. If children see adults eating or drinking nutritionally poor choices, they receive the wrong or contradictory message from their role models.

## **WHAT IS POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING?**

Positive role modelling is when adults enjoy eating well and being physically active, and talk about their lifestyle habits and body in a positive way. This helps children value healthy eating, enjoy moving their bodies, and accept and feel good about themselves.

## **BENEFITS OF POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING:**

- Reinforces healthy eating and body image education
- Encourages children to value and enjoy healthy eating
- Develops children’s preferences for healthy foods and beverages
- Shows others that the child care setting takes the health of its children seriously

## **TIPS FOR POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING:**

- Encourage healthy choices by enjoying a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit at each meal and snack.
  - Show children you are open to and excited to try new vegetables and fruit, and enjoy eating them in different ways.

- Avoid sharing personal dislike for foods or stating you do not eat certain foods.
- Let children choose what to eat from the healthy foods offered; show them how to politely say “no thank you.”
- Avoid categorizing foods as “good” or “bad.”
- Respect that healthy bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and that healthy bodies look different for everyone.
  - Avoid commenting on the size, shape, or appearance of yourself and others.
  - Focus on positive attributes in yourself and others that are not related to appearance, such as attitudes, efforts, skills, talent, and abilities.
  - Avoid making assumptions on children’s eating habits and activity levels based on their weight/shape.
- Eat regular meals and snacks, pay attention to hunger and fullness cues, and encourage children to do the same.
  - When possible, choose from the same food and beverages offered to children.
  - Eat with children, when possible. Use this time to talk about the foods offered and role model proper utensil use and table manners.



## WHAT IS YOUR ROLE MODELLING PRACTICE?

Reflect on if or how your behaviours show positive role modelling when you eat together with children.

### Ways to set a good example:

- Choose from the same foods and beverages served to children, when appropriate.
- Avoid bringing in personal food and beverages in the child care areas.
- Refrain from using personal electronics (e.g., cell phones) during snack and meal times.
- Refrain from making negative comments about the food and beverage choices served.
- Refrain from conversations about body size, amount of food eaten, dieting, and weight loss.
- Treat all children the same way regardless of their body size or shape (e.g., avoid making judgment on the amount of food a child chooses to eat).
- Refrain from making assumptions about how well or poorly a child will eat based on their weight.





## **A TOOLKIT FOR ONTARIO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

**ODPH is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system. ODPH provides leadership in public health nutrition to improve the health of Ontario residents.**

**For more information visit [odph.ca](http://odph.ca)**

