

## Healthy eating ↔ Positive mental well-being

### The facts – Ontario students (grades 7-12)

85%

**Do not**  
eat enough  
vegetables  
and fruit.



58%

**Do not**  
eat breakfast  
before school  
every day.



247,000

**27% of students**  
rate their mental  
health as fair  
or poor.



### Healthy foods for a healthy mind

#### Eating healthy food may be linked to:

- Better mental health and well-being
- Better self-esteem and less peer problems
- Better academic performance and achievement
- Increased attention and memory
- Better able to cope with stress
- Lower feelings of depression and anxiety

#### Eating less healthy food may be linked to:

- Low mood
- Feelings of anxiety
- Adverse classroom behaviour
- Difficult academic outcomes

### Schools play an important role - What can we do?

- ✓ Make healthy eating a priority and include it in school action plans.
- ✓ Build a healthy school food environment using the [Foundations for Healthy School Framework](#).
- ✓ Provide healthy food and beverage choices anytime food is offered.
- ✓ Limit access to foods that are linked with poor mental well-being.



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

Source: Canada's Food Guide



1. Offer only water at all school events.
2. Use non-food rewards for student recognition.
3. Use foods from [Canada's Food Guide](#) in classroom lessons or school activities.
4. Provide practical food literacy opportunities to learn about, see, smell, touch, grow, cook, and try a variety of food.
5. Make classroom celebrations healthier.

6. Encourage students to eat together and provide at least 25 minutes of eating time. Limit distractions and turn off screens.
7. [Make it a practice not to comment on students' lunches](#). Understand that many factors influence what foods families provide. Trust students to listen to their own hunger cues.
8. Offer food items in [Student Nutrition Programs](#) that meet the nutrition guidelines.
9. Engage in healthy fundraising initiatives.
10. Offer nutritious and appealing menu items and create a warm social environment in the cafeteria.

Looking for more ideas? Check out [brightbites.ca](#)