



How to Plan a Menu

Breakfast


Use the “Nutrition tips” in the right hand column for each meal and food group in your menu to help with healthy menu planning:

- ✓ Offer most often foods (on a daily basis)
- ✗ Offer least often foods


Select the Protein Foods

Protein Foods	Nutrition Tips
<p>Examples include eggs, nut butters, baked beans, milk and fortified soy beverages, cottage cheese, cheese, and yogurt.</p> <p>Eggs can be included in the menu daily, prepared in a variety of ways (for example, boiled, poached, or scrambled).</p> <p>Check the Nutrition Facts label to ensure that soy beverages are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.</p>  	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg substitutes can be used as a healthy choice. For example, egg whites and egg white based omelets. • Yogurt with 2% Milk Fat (M.F.) or less • Milk or evaporated milk with 2% (M.F.) or less in coffee or tea • Cheeses with 20% M.F. or less • No salt added cottage cheese
	<p>✗ Offer Least Often</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ham, bacon, sausage, quiche, and fried eggs • Cream cheese, ice cream, coffee cream, whipping cream, and regular sour cream • Processed cheese products such as processed cheese slices or spreads are high in salt.

Select the Grain Products

Grain Foods	Nutrition Tips
<p>Examples include whole grain cooked or cold cereals, toast, French toast, muffins, pancakes, scones, or waffles</p> <p>Provide hot and cold cereal options. Offer a high fibre cereal (that has at least 4 g of fibre per serving) as a choice each day.</p> <p>To learn how to find a high fibre cereal, see Appendix 2C, Nutrition Education Resources for tips on label reading.</p>  <p>Starchy vegetables such as potatoes or corn can be offered instead of a Grain Product at meals.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make at least half of the grains offered each day whole grain. For example, whole grain breads for toast, whole grain cold cereals, and oatmeal. • Bran cereal (such as Bran Buds®) can be offered on the side to increase fibre content. • Offer ground flax seed, dried fruit, or nuts with hot cereals to increase fibre content and add more flavour and variety.
	<p>✗ Offer Least Often</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croissants, store bought muffins • Granola type cereals • Instant hot cereals can be higher in sodium


Select the Vegetables and Fruits

Vegetables and Fruits	Nutrition Tips
<p>Examples include fresh, frozen or canned fruits or vegetables, or 100% fruit juice. Fresh fruit and/or canned fruit can be offered in addition to, or instead of, juice at breakfast.</p>  <p>Vegetables can be added to mixed dishes, such as mushrooms or bell peppers in an omelet.</p> <p>Vegetables and fruits such as tomato slices or fresh orange slices can be used as a garnish.</p> <p>Fruit can be offered in a smoothie to increase variety.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If canned fruit is used, then 'no-sugar added' or 'in water or fruit juice' is preferred over 'in syrup' varieties. <p>× Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hash browns or fried potatoes

Lunch and supper for each day


Offer a main meal (with a hot entrée) and a lighter meal (with the option of cold foods) each day. The main meal may be provided at either lunch or supper.

Select the entrée using Protein Foods choices

Protein Foods	Nutrition Tips
<p>The entrées offered at lunch and supper should each provide at least one portion of protein foods. Examples include fish, poultry, lean meat, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), tofu, or eggs as well as milk and fortified soy beverages, cottage cheese, cheese, and yogurt.</p> <p>Check the Nutrition Facts label to ensure that soy beverages are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.</p>  <p>Include a vegetarian option (meat alternative), such as baked beans, at least once per week.</p> <p>Have an alternate entrée available such as a cold sandwich.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fish at least twice a week Offer fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, herring, Arctic char, anchovies, and trout that contain healthy fats. • Sandwiches made with leftover meats (such as roasted/baked chicken) are lower in sodium and fat than those made with deli meats. Canned meats/fish (canned in water) or egg salad may also be used. • Yogurt with 2% M.F. or less • Milk or evaporated milk with 2% (M.F.) or less in coffee or tea • Cheeses with 20% M.F. or less • Cottage cheese <p>× Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processed meats, such as bacon, bologna, ham, salami, sausage, and wieners • Deep-fried foods * • Cream cheese, ice cream, coffee cream, whipping cream, and regular sour cream • Processed cheese products such as processed cheese slices or spreads are high in salt


* If a deep-fried food is offered, a non-fried option should also be available. For example, provide roast chicken as an alternative to fried fish or steamed rice if French fries are served.

Select the Grain Products to accompany the entrée

Grain Foods	Nutrition Tips
<p>Offer rice, pasta, or potatoes as a side at the main meal, unless they are included as part of an entrée. For example, shepherd's pie, or chicken stir-fry with brown rice.</p>  <p>Offer a variety of Grain Products to help meet cultural considerations.</p> <p>For more tips on choosing whole grains, see the Nutrition Education Materials list in Appendix 2C.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats and oatmeal, quinoa, whole wheat pasta, and wild rice <p>✗ Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garlic bread and cheese bread White rice and pasta from mixes can be higher in sodium.


Note: Starchy vegetables such as potatoes or corn can be offered instead of a Grain Product at meals

Select Vegetables and Fruits for each meal


Vegetables and Fruits	Nutrition Tips
<p>Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables or fruits can be used.</p> <p>Offer a variety of colours. For example, potatoes with broccoli and carrots.</p> <p>Serve one hot vegetable and one cold vegetable together. For example, steamed cauliflower and raw spinach salad.</p>  <p>Salads can be provided as entrées if they include one portion of protein foods.</p> <p>Try not to offer the same vegetable or fruit more than once per day. For example, if carrots sticks or canned peaches are offered at lunch, then avoid offering again at supper.</p> <p>Use local seasonal vegetables or fruits whenever possible.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a variety of vegetables and fruits. A list of vegetables and fruits can be found in Appendix 2H, Menu Item Suggestions. <p>✗ Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If canned vegetables are used, choose no salt added, sodium-reduced, low sodium, or less salt varieties.

Select the Dessert for each meal


A healthy balanced diet should be offered to all residents. However, there are times when a resident may choose foods that are recommended least often, for quality of life. Therefore, the diet provided to that resident may offer more comfort foods (and less healthy choices) to help improve intake (for example, a higher calorie or higher fat dessert can be provided once a day). Use the nutrition tips below to provide a balanced menu at your site.

Dessert	Nutrition Tips
<p>Offer fresh or canned fruit as dessert most often.</p>  <p>Fruit based or milk-based desserts are also good options. Examples include fruit crumbles, milk pudding, custard, mousse, frozen yogurt, and tofu desserts. Refer to dessert recipes on the Alberta Health Services website, search for Inspiring Healthy Eating.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If canned fruit is used choose 'no-sugar added' or 'in water or fruit juice' varieties. Always provide another dessert choice such as fruit or yogurt when serving desserts higher in sugar or fat. <p>For tips on healthy baking, see the Nutrition Education Materials list in Appendix 2C.</p> <p>✗ Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dessert items which are higher in fat, sugar, and salt such as ice cream, cake, and pastries.


Select Soups as needed

Soups	Nutrition Tips
<p>Offer soup daily as the lighter meal. Soup can also be offered at the main meal as an option.</p> <p>Soups can be included as an appetizer or an entrée.</p> <p>Leftover meat, vegetables or pasta can be used in soups to help reduce food wastage.</p> <p>Switch between broth and cream-based soups for variety.</p>  <p>In summer, cold soups, such as chilled cucumber, can be offered to increase variety.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make or buy low salt and low fat varieties whenever possible. For example, low sodium chicken noodle, and low fat cream of broccoli. <p>✗ Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear broth/consommé does not provide enough nutrition to be the soup choice.

Plan snacks daily.

Snacks	Nutrition Tips
<p>Each snack should include at least one food choice, and a drink.</p> <p>Snacks can be used to help ensure residents have a variety of food choices throughout the day.</p> <p>For example, if a day is low in Vegetables and Fruits at meals, offer these foods as part of a snack.</p> <p>Consider offering snack choices higher in protein for those residents with poor appetite.</p> <p>The number and timing of snacks offered can vary depending on meal times and specific resident needs.</p>  <p>Refer to Section 3.5 for more information on snacks.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk products such as low-fat yogurt with 2% M.F. or less • Cheeses with 20% M.F. or less • Choose fresh fruit and vegetables for a quick and healthy snack. • Always provide an alternative choice such as fruit or plain yogurt when offering snacks higher in fat or sugar. <p>To access healthier snack ideas and tips on using less fat and sugar in baking, see the Nutrition Education Materials list in Appendix 2C.</p> <p>* Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dessert items higher in fat, sugar, and salt such as ice cream, cake, and pastries. • Snacks higher in fat, sugar, and salt. If snacks higher in fat, sugar, or salt are offered, serving sizes should be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 cup/ 250 mL (30 g) of chips, crackers, or high sugar cereal ○ 2 cookies (30-38 g cookies) ○ 1 small cereal bar (30 g) ○ 55 g baked goods (pastries, muffins, doughnuts) ○ ½ cup/ 125 mL (85 g) frozen desserts (ice cream, frozen ice cream bar) ○ 1 cup/250 mL sweetened drink (iced tea, lemonade)

Select condiments and garnishes for all meals and snacks as needed.

Condiments and Garnishes	Nutrition Tips
<p>All condiments and sauces should complement the meal. For example, a lemon wedge or tartar sauce with baked fish, syrup with waffles, and gravy for mashed potatoes.</p> <p>Examples include ketchup, mustard, relish, vinegar, jam, sugar, sugar substitutes, syrup, pepper, and herbs.</p>  <p>Edible garnishes are used for decoration and visual appeal, but can also add flavour (cinnamon on hot cereal, parsley on lasagna, or fresh dill on salmon filets).</p> <p>Crackers with unsalted tops should be available with soup.</p>	<p>✓ Offer Most Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt and low sodium soy sauce can be available upon resident request instead of leaving them on the table or displayed. • Milk with coffee/tea. Cream or coffee whitener can be available upon resident request. • Soft margarine. Butter can be available upon resident request. • Crackers with unsalted tops <p>* Offer Least Often</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condiments high in sugar, saturated fat, and salt (BBQ sauce, butter, regular soy sauce).

See Section 2.7 of the toolkit for information on [Standardized Portion Sizes](#) for these foods.