

Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth – An Overview

The [*Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth \(ANGCY\)*](#) are designed to help Albertans create environments that provide healthy food choices and promote healthy eating habits. They can be used in childcare facilities, schools, and recreation/community centres. The ANGCY are not intended to apply to foods brought in from home.

The Food Rating System

This rating system puts all foods into three categories, based on nutrition criteria. The three categories are: Choose Most Often, Choose Sometimes and Choose Least Often.



Choose Most Often
High nutrient foods

These foods are all healthy choices in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Offer these foods as often as possible.



Choose Sometimes
Moderate nutrient foods

These foods may provide beneficial nutrients, but may be higher in added sugar, unhealthy fat, and sodium (salt).



Choose Least Often
Low nutrient foods

Foods from this category are low in nutrients and higher in calories, fat, sugar, and salt. Offering these foods isn't recommended.

Using the Food Rating System

The nutrition criteria are based on **one Canada's Food Guide serving**. For packaged foods, read the Nutrition Facts table and ingredient list and note the serving size, as it may be different than the serving size in the Food Guide.

A food must meet **all** criteria to fit into a category. For example:

- Most plain yogurts meet the nutrient criteria per serving for total fat, saturated fat, sugar, protein, sodium (salt) and calcium. This is why it is classified as Choose Most Often.
- Higher milk fat plain yogurts or flavoured yogurts are usually classified as Choose Sometimes because the fat and sugar content may not meet the criteria to be Choose Most Often.

Tips for Implementing ANGCY

- Offer foods that are consistent with the healthy eating messages in your facility.
- If using rewards, use non-food items for rewarding children.
- Consider changing the rating categories to simple symbols such as “Go”, “Yield”, and “Stop.”
- Involve children and youth in taste testing new food/menu items.

Facility Recommendations

Schools

- Use Canada's Food Guide. Meals should include foods from all 4 food groups. Snacks should be foods from 2 food groups.
- Schools can work toward the ANGCY targets over time:
 - **Elementary Schools** – 100% of the foods offered on a regular schedule should be from the Choose Most Often category.
 - **Junior High Schools** – 100% of foods offered on a regular schedule should be from the Choose Most Often (60%) and Choose Sometimes (40%) categories.
 - **High Schools** – 100% of foods offered on a regular schedule should be from the Choose Most Often (50%) and Choose Sometimes (50%) categories.
 - **Multi-Grade Schools** – should follow the most conservative guidelines.

Childcare Facilities

- Use Canada's Food Guide. Meals should include foods from all 4 food groups. Snacks should be foods from 2 food groups.
- 100% of foods offered on a regular schedule should be from the Choose Most Often category.
- Provide an appropriate time and space to eat.

Recreation/Community Centres

The following foods should always be available:

- Vegetables and fruit (raw or prepared with little to no added fat, sugar, or salt)
- Whole grain foods
- Lean meat, poultry, and fish products
- Water, milk, and 100% vegetable or fruit juice

Beverage Recommendations

- Promote drinking water to quench thirst and provide adequate hydration. Water fountains should be available and in working condition.
- Offer milk and fortified soy beverages. Limit 100% vegetable and fruit juices to ½ cup (125 mL) per day.
- Avoid offering pop, iced tea, sports drinks, diet beverages, fruit punches, fruit drinks, and fruit 'ades' (such as lemonade).
- Avoid providing caffeinated beverages such as pop, energy drinks, coffee, and tea to children and youth.

Additional Resources

Alberta Health Services:

Healthy Eating Starts Here

<http://www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca>

Alberta Health:

Healthy eating for children and youth in schools:

A booklet to help you understand the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/healthy-eating-for-children-and-youth-in-schools>

Healthy eating in recreation and community centres: A booklet to help you understand the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/healthy-eating-in-recreation-and-community-centres>

Healthy eating in childcare centres: A booklet to help you understand the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/healthy-eating-for-children-in-childcare-centres>