

Grade 7: Food Influences and Nutrition Needs



Developed by AHS, Nutrition Services in consultation with the Body Image Research Lab at the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education – April 2025



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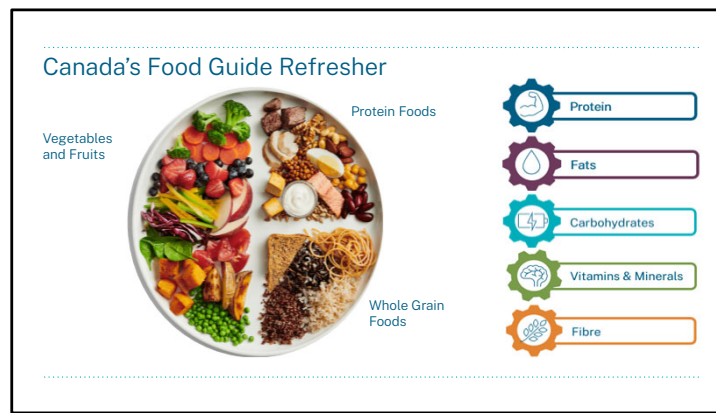
Reference:

Government of Canada. Marketing Can Influence Your Food Choices. 2020.
Available from:

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>

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Speaker Notes:

- Who has seen this plate before? This is Canada's food guide.
- Canada's food guide includes :
 - Vegetables and Fruits
 - Protein foods
 - Whole grains foods
- Since we know that the foods from Canada's food guide have a different function in our body, it is important to try to eat a variety of foods from all parts of the plate.
- The Canada's food guide plate shows the types and proportions of food that can help you get all the nutrition your body needs.
- Aim for:
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ your meal to be vegetables and/or fruit
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ from protein foods
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains.

Eating this way will help ensure you are getting a variety of foods and balanced meals and snacks, providing the nutrients your body needs.

- Fibre
- Carbohydrates
- Protein
- Fats
- Vitamins and minerals
- Water

Sometimes food processing can remove important nutrients from foods such as vitamins, minerals and fibre. The food guide contains foods that are unprocessed or minimally processed.

Lastly, make water your drink of choice.

References:

Health Canada. Canada's food guide snapshot. 2025-04-04.

Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot/>

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Eat vegetables and fruit. 2023-09-22.

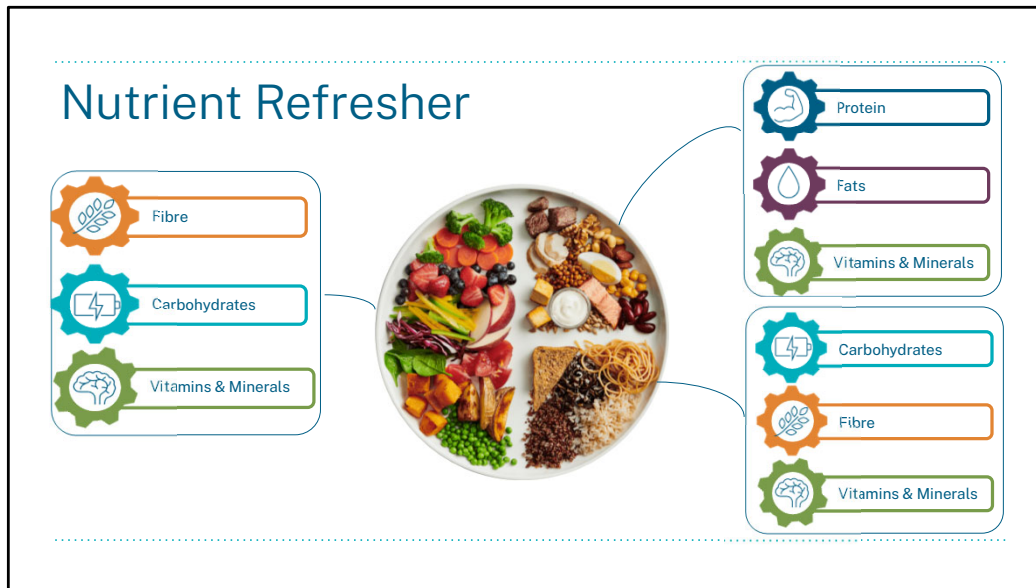
Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/make-it-a-habit-to-eat-vegetables-fruit-whole-grains-and-protein-foods/eat-vegetables-and-fruits/>

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Eat whole grain foods. 2022-05-03.

Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/make-it-a-habit-to-eat-vegetables-fruit-whole-grains-and-protein-foods/eat-whole-grain-foods/>

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Eat protein foods. 2022-05-03. Available from:

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/make-it-a-habit-to-eat-vegetables-fruit-whole-grains-and-protein-foods/eat-protein-foods/>



Speaker Notes

As adolescents, you need more energy and nutrients to support your growth and development. The best way for you to get the nutrients you need is to eat meals and snacks that contain a variety of foods, including vegetables, fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods.

As a refresher, each part of the food guide plate gives your body different things. For example,

- **Vegetables and Fruits** give you fibre (which helps with digestion and helps you feel full for longer), carbohydrates for energy, along with all sorts of vitamins and minerals that help your brain and body work their best.
- **Whole grain foods** also give you fibre and carbohydrate, along with a different mix of vitamins and minerals.
- **Protein foods** give your body lasting energy through protein and fat, as well as the building blocks for strong muscles, tissues (like skin) and organs. You get another mix of vitamins and minerals from these foods.

All together, eating a variety of foods from around the plate will help you feel and be your best.

References:

Health Canada. Canada's food guide snapshot. 2025-04-04.

Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot/>

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Eat vegetables and fruit. 2023-09-22.

Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/make-it-a-habit-to-eat-vegetables-fruit-whole-grains-and-protein-foods/eat-vegetables-and-fruits/>

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Eat whole grain foods. 2022-05-03.

Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/make-it-a-habit-to-eat-vegetables-fruit-whole-grains-and-protein-foods/eat-whole-grain-foods/>

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Eat protein foods. 2022-05-03. Available from:

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Speaker Notes:

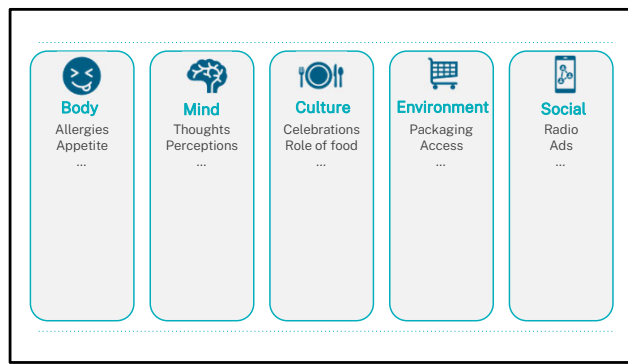
There are so many things that influence what we eat. Sometimes what we eat is a practical choice – you are hungry at home and you need to choose from what food is available in the cupboard. What you eat may be based on food allergies or traditions in your family and culture. Other times it might be advertising or your friend telling you a food tastes really good. Influences are all around us and shape the food choices we make.

Activity: Think-Pair-Share (Use the What Influences the Food We Eat? worksheet or have students create their own list on a blank sheet of paper, or electronically)

1. Ask students to first think on their own about what influences what people eat. These can be their own personal influences or all the different influences they imagine might factor into food choices.
2. Then, have students join in pairs or small groups to compare ideas and add to their lists.
3. Come back together as a class and create a master list of ideas. A list of ideas is shared on the next slide.

Optional: If short on time, brainstorm together as a class

Image sources: Microsoft 365 Stock Images



Optional slide (hide or skip if not using)

Speaker Notes:

Sample of responses for what influences what we eat are listed below. Please note, this is not an exhaustive list, and some factors could fall in multiple categories.

Sample Answers:

Internal Influences (Your Body)

- Hunger and fullness
- Taste
- Appetite
- Wants or cravings
- Allergies or intolerances
- Biology (e.g., cilantro can taste like soap due to genetics)

Psychology (Your Mind)

- Thoughts
- Experiences
- Memories
- Emotions
- Personality
- Perceptions

Culture

- Types of food
- Role of food in celebrations and events
- How, when, where food is eaten
- Customs and beliefs
- Traditions

Physical Environment

- Availability – what parents/caregivers buy and what is available at stores in your area
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Marketing
- Product placement
- Food packaging

Social Environment

- Friends or peers
- Celebrities
- Influencers/content creators
- Social media



Is it wrong to have your food choices influenced by the factors we came up with?



Body



Mind



Culture



Environment



Social

Speaker Notes:

Ask: Is it wrong to have your food choices influenced by the factors we came up with?

Sample Answers:

- No. Listening to your body, practicing your culture and traditions, and sharing and learning about food from others can all be positive experiences and a way to express who you are.
- However, factors like food marketing are all around us. Many of the foods that companies try to influence you to buy and consume do not help you get what you need for growth and development.

Image sources:

Microsoft 365 Stock Images



Speaker Notes:

Food marketing is a type of advertising that promotes and influences you to buy a company's food or drink. Food marketing can take many forms, including event sponsorship, social media posts, product placement in tv and movies, commercials on tv, the radio, or before movies/online video, celebrity or content creator endorsements (saying they like a product or buy a product) and so much more.

Ask: Think back to last week - have you noticed any food marketing around you?

Sample Answers:

Examples could include food ads on stadium screens, floors or boards if watching sports, on jerseys, helmets, or equipment (including cars), advertising on side of vending machines, characters or content creators consuming food or beverages on video, food brands hosting contests or sweepstakes, song lyrics about brands, sponsored posts on social media.

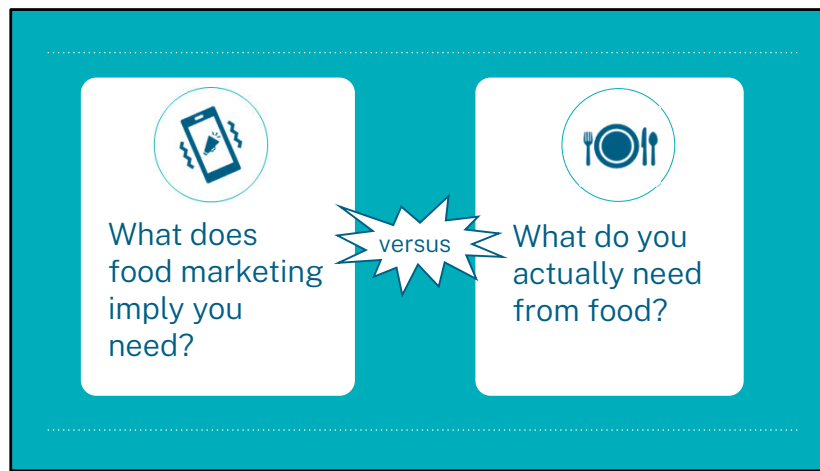
Interesting Fact: Companies use personal data to target ads to their desired audience based on age, gender, web browsing history, or purchasing history

Image sources:

Microsoft 365 Stock Images

Reference:

Marketing can influence your food choices – Canada's Food Guide. <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>



Speaker Notes:

Creators of food marketing are not just selling a product, but they are selling an image, a lifestyle, and a feeling. It can make it difficult to cut through the illusion and think back to the basics of what you actually need from your food. Knowing how food marketing can affect your food choices can help you recognize when food is being marketed to you, help you better decide if the food is actually helping you get what you need to live your best life, and understand how marketing tries to get into your mind.

Activity: Marketing vs Needs (Food Marketing vs Food Needs worksheet)

Discussion: Let's take a moment to think – Thinking of advertisements you have seen (video or print), what do they tend to imply you need? In other words, what are they trying to sell you beyond just the food/beverage?

Sample answers: To look a certain way, to eat/drink a certain way, to have a particular lifestyle (that you will achieve if you have the product in your life), to be 'on trend,' you need to wear or portray a certain aesthetic or label, that you need this product to be healthy/athletic/cool/successful

Discussion: What do you actually need from food?

Sample answers: energy (calories) to fuel brain and body functions, body building blocks (carbohydrates, protein, fat), fibre, vitamins, minerals, safety (free of allergens if allergic, not moldy or spoiled), variety

Food is also an important way to connect us to our culture and to each other. Food helps you learn, practice, and preserve your culture and food traditions. The act of preparing and sharing food and meals builds and strengthen relationships. Food can have an important role as a tool to express yourself, your values and your history, along with your culture.



Speaker Notes:

Being aware of food marketing is a skill that can help you:

- recognize when you are being influenced to buy/consume a brand's food or drinks
- view and choose food beyond marketing messaging
- stand up for what your body needs

Discuss Tips for Making Choices

- ☐ What is your body saying it needs?
Is your stomach growling?
Do you have a headache or feel cranky?
- ☐ Why do you want to buy or choose a certain food or drink?
Will it help you feel better?
Does it give you a variety of nutrients?
- ☐ Where did your ideas about the food come from?
Information you learned in school or something you heard online?

Reference:

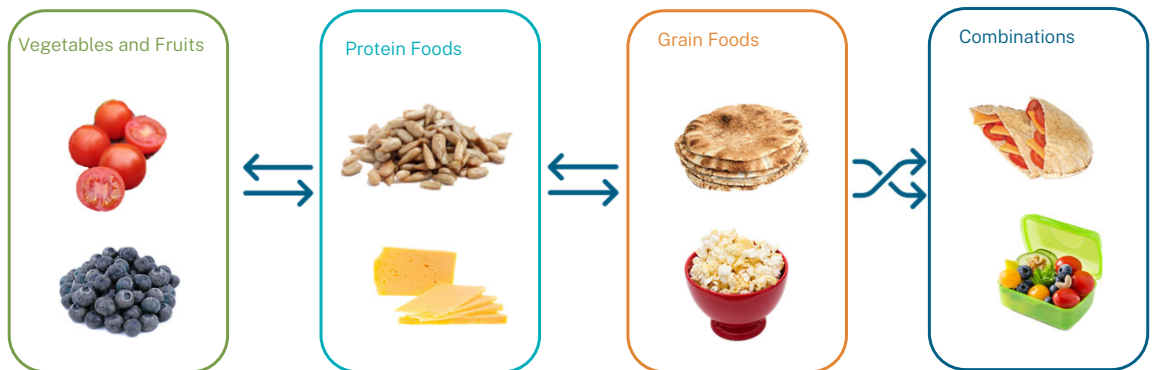
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<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>

Image sources:

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Snack Matrix: Push back against marketing when you are hungry!



Speaker Notes:

It can be hard to make savvy decisions when you are hungry. Hunger can lead to feelings of irritation, annoyance, short temper and being overwhelmed. This is why we sometimes call it 'hanger.' Instead of having a clear mind to make decisions that work toward meeting your nutrition needs, it may feel easiest to pick something to eat that seems easy, appealing, and front-of-mind – something that has been marketed to you lately!

Pre-identifying foods that you regularly have access to at home or in the usual spaces you spend time can help make decision making easier – mix and match two or more foods (ideally from different groups of foods) to make a delicious and nutritious snack.

Assignment: Snack Matrix

- Design your own snack matrix based on the groups of food on Canada's food guide. Personalize it to what you enjoy and have available at home.
- Use your art medium of choice. Examples: draw, paint, collage from magazines/flyers, online design, etc.



Speaker Notes:

Activity 3 Beyond Marketing Snack Matrix:

Ask students to design a snack matrix including vegetables and fruits, grain foods, and protein foods. The foods included in the matrix should be foods that they have access to on a regular basis, either at home or in the environments that they regularly frequent. If students are feeling stuck, they can start by looking at the Canada's food guide Snapshot to get ideas.

A fourth column is where they can make note of their favourite combinations of the foods they identified, using two or more different foods. Examples could include a sandwich or wrap, a smoothie, a noodle bowl, etc. Not all foods that were individually identified need to be found in their combination examples, as they may like to snack on some foods just as they are.

Invite students to get creative and use their art medium of choice. They can draw, paint, make a collage or use an online graphics program to create their own matrix. The purpose of this activity is to have students identify nutritious choices that they can refer back to when deciding what to choose for a snack. This is one tool they can use to push back against marketing influences when making food choices. As part of this activity students can identify some of the factors that will influence the choices in their matrix (e.g., time, eating at home or packing for away, etc.).

Teacher Background:

Reminder: When teaching children and youth about vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods, it is important to consider what foods students have available to them. When students are coming up with ideas for foods within an activity, encourage them to list a variety of the foods they enjoy and can access. This may include different forms of vegetables and fruits (fresh, frozen, canned), different types of protein foods (animal based and plant based), and a variety of different grains (including non-whole grain options).

Image source: Painting –Microsoft 365 Stock Images





Completion Checklist

- ☐ List five items in each group of food: **vegetables and fruits**, **protein foods**, and **grain foods**
- ☐ Mix and match items from at least two different groups of food to create a **snack combination**
- ☐ Create five different **snack combinations**
- ☐ Identify at least 3 factors that will influence your snack choices (example: amount of time you have to prepare the snack)

Grade 7

Snack Matrix

List five items in each group of food. Mix and match items from two or more groups of food to create five snack combinations.

| Vegetables and Fruits | Protein Foods | Grain Foods | Combinations |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |
| • | • | • | • |
| • | • | • | • |
| • | • | • | • |

My main influences when making food choices are:

Speaker Notes:

Activity 3 Beyond Marketing Snack Matrix:

Review completion guidelines