



Northern Health Position on Healthy Eating

Healthy eating is fundamental to the overall health of individuals, families and communities. An unhealthy diet is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases and conditions, such as osteoporosis, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, anemia, diabetes and obesity. However, diet is also a modifiable risk factor for most people. Across an individual's lifespan, it supports daily living by promoting physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Northern Health Position on Healthy Eating

Northern Health seeks to optimize health and wellness and improve quality of life by promoting healthy eating among all Northern residents, by working with individuals and community partners to support and promote:

- A broad, balanced, inclusive and responsive definition of healthy eating.
- The right of all to achieve healthy eating.
- Physical and social environments, programs, and policies that support healthy eating along the continuum of life.
- Use of a "do no harm" approach to healthy eating to promote positive relationships with food and eating and positive body image, to discourage the development of disordered eating attitudes and behaviours.

Northern Health will enable healthy eating by:

- promoting a comprehensive approach to healthy eating that considers nutrition, food, eating competence, food systems, community food security, pleasure and traditions, and how these factors influence healthy eating.
- leading and supporting internal policies, programs and initiatives to create supportive environments for staff, clients, patients and residents.
- collaborating with external partners to support community level, systemic change to enable the development and maintenance of sustainable food systems and healthy eating environments where people live, learn, work and play.

For further information, please refer to the complete Northern Health ***Position Statement on Healthy Eating*** available on the Northern Health web site: <http://northernhealth.ca> ([About Us/Position Statements Addressing Risk Factors](http://northernhealth.ca/AboutUs/PositionStatementsAddressingRiskFactors)) or by using the following address: <http://northernhealth.ca/AboutUs/PositionStatementsAddressingRiskFactors.aspx>

Healthy Eating: An Integrated Concept

Generally, Canadians do not eat healthfully. Healthy eating is influenced by a number of factors including nutrition, food, eating competence, food systems, food security and pleasure and traditions. These factors impact food environments where people live, learn, work, play and are cared for.

Food choices are more complex than knowing the right amount and type of food to eat. Choices are also often outside of the control of individuals, particularly those who are already vulnerable in society. Consequently, an approach that targets these factors across household, community and system boundaries is the best chance of enabling healthy eating for all.

An unhealthy diet is less often a matter of personal choice and more often a function of social and economic inequalities.

-ONTARIO HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide

The national guidelines for healthy eating for Canadians promote adequacy, moderation, variety, and balance in food choices. In particular, Canadians are encouraged to eat a variety of servings each day from the four food groups: Vegetables & Fruit, Grain Products, Milk & Alternatives, and Meat & Alternatives. The recommended number of servings each day varies by age and gender (Table 1) to respond to the unique needs along the lifecycle. Within each food group, quality guidance statements are provided. For example, eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day; eat vegetables and fruit rather than juice; choose whole grain products at least half the time; and eat two food guide servings of fish each week.

Table 1: Serving Recommendations

Age in Years	Children			Teens		Adults			
	2-3	4-8	9-13	14-18		19-50		51+	
	Girls and Boys			Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Vegetables and Fruit	4	5	6	7	8	7-8	8-10	7	7
Grain Products	3	4	6	6	7	6-7	8	6	7
Milk and Alternatives	2	2	3-4	3-4	3-4	2	2	3	3
Meat and Alternatives	1	1	1-2	2	3	2	3	2	3

Additional information about *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* can be found online at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>