

# Healthy food and drink choices in schools

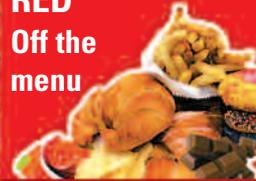
**GREEN**  
Fill the  
menu



**AMBER**  
Select  
carefully



**RED**  
Off the  
menu



Australian Better Health Initiative: A joint Australian, State and Territory initiative. Acknowledgement NSW Health

## Myths surrounding healthy food and drinks

**Myth:** Children don't like fruit.

**Fact:** Fruit is very popular amongst children if it is promoted well. Some children really like fruit when it is cut into pieces rather than served whole. There are many ways fruit can be used to make delicious and healthy snacks (ie kebabs, fruit cups). Everybody prefers fruit that is cold and fresh.

**Myth:** Refined sugars are the best source of energy because the body absorbs them quickly.

**Fact:** Sugar provides energy but not the essential nutrients for the body to use the energy. Complex carbohydrates such as breads, cereals, fruits and vegetable are preferable to sugar. These foods provide a slow, steady supply of energy, as well as the nutrients essential for the body to use that energy.

**Myth:** Flavoured milk should be avoided because it is high in sugar.

**Fact:** Flavoured milk is a nutritious drink for children. It contains all the nutrients of plain milk, with some extra energy provided from sugar. It has about the same amount of sugar as unsweetened orange juice. Even so, low fat plain milk is the best choice for children.

**Myth:** Canned food is not healthy food.

**Fact:** Canned foods can be good alternatives to fresh foods, especially where fresh produce is difficult to source. Fruits and vegetables are put into cans when they are very fresh. The canning process preserves most of the vitamins and all of the protein, minerals, fibre and carbohydrate in the food. If fresh fruits and vegetables are old and wilted they can actually have fewer vitamins than their canned alternatives. Canned legumes like baked beans and four-bean mix are particularly healthy foods. Choose reduced salt varieties and fruits in natural juices where possible.

**Myth:** Children who are active should drink sports drinks.

**Fact:** For school children, water is the best thirst quencher. Sports drinks are designed for the use of athletes competing or training in endurance sports. They are designed to prevent dehydration during these times and provide some energy. The volume that sports drinks are sold in means they provide the same amount of sugar as soft drink and 2-3 times more sodium (salt).

**Myth:** Health bars and roll-ups are healthy snack foods for children.

**Fact:** While health bars do contain small amounts of nutritious ingredients such as oats and dried fruit, they often contain large amounts of sugars and/or fat in the form of raw sugar, glucose, honey and carob or a combination. The sugar in roll-ups and muesli bars sticks to children's teeth and can contribute to tooth decay. Star Choice registered muesli bars and roll-ups in the 'amber' category (and those that meet the criteria for registration) should only be eaten occasionally.

**Myth:** Most nutrients are taken out of white bread during the processing.

**Fact:** White bread is a nutritious food that provides B vitamins, iron, some protein and dietary fibre. While wholemeal bread is higher in these nutrients and therefore preferable, white bread is still better than no bread at all. White bread sandwiches and rolls are better choices than high-fat, low-fibre alternative foods.

**Myth:** Children need extra salt in hot weather and during exercise.

**Fact:** Plain water is what the body really needs before, during and after exercise and in hot weather. Children need to drink more water at these times. Most Australians get more salt from their diet than their body needs, even if they don't add it to food during cooking or at the table. Salt occurs naturally in a wide variety of foods and is added to many processed foods.