



Department of  
Education  
and Training

# Healthy food and drink choices in schools

Information for parents and carers

## From the Minister

GREEN AMBER RED – These are the new, easy-to-follow signals to help public schools plan menus full of healthy, nutritious and affordable food for your children.

Schools have a vital role to play in helping to reduce the worldwide epidemic of childhood obesity. They should reinforce nutrition messages being taught in the classroom by modelling healthy food and drink choices in their canteens, for class treats, and on school camps and excursions.

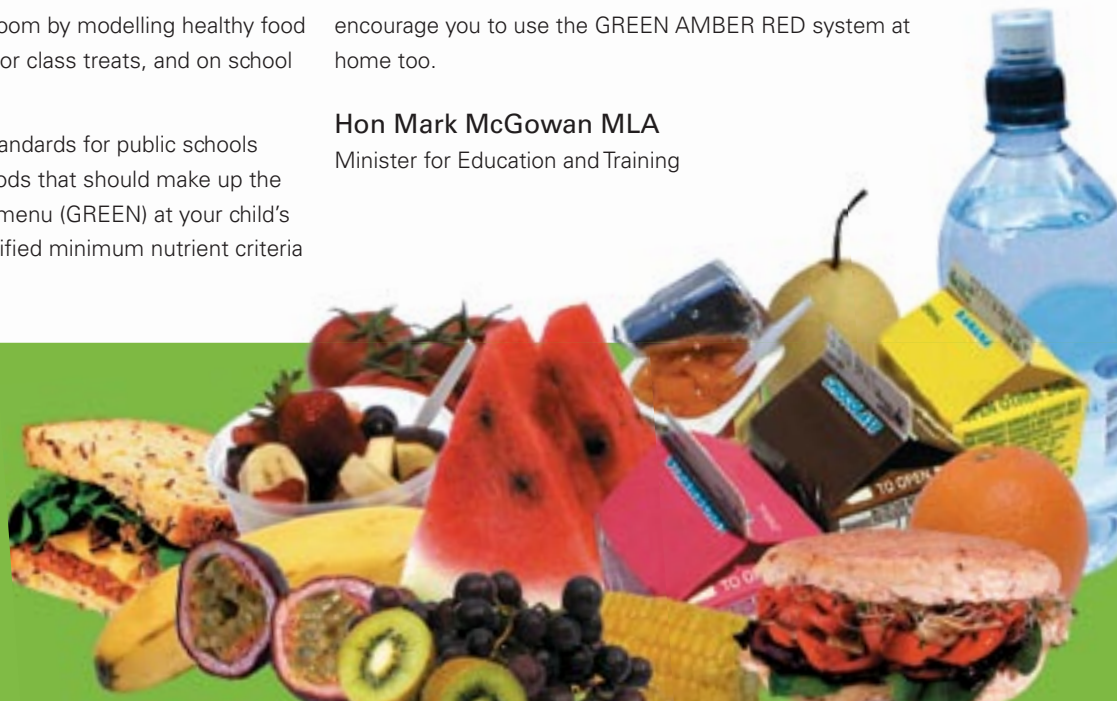
The WA Government has set new standards for public schools which ensure a wide range of the foods that should make up the majority of a healthy diet are on the menu (GREEN) at your child's school. Foods that do not meet specified minimum nutrient criteria are now off the menu (RED).

Along with the requirement from 2007 for students in Years 1 to 10 to participate in a minimum of two hours of physical activity each week, this new policy for healthy food and drink choices in schools is another step in ensuring our children are fit and healthy.

Your children will benefit from these new standards and I encourage you to use the GREEN AMBER RED system at home too.

**Hon Mark McGowan MLA**  
Minister for Education and Training

**GREEN**  
Fill the menu



**AMBER**  
Select carefully



**RED**  
Off the menu



## What is changing in public schools?

In March 2006 the WA Government commissioned a review of the nutritional value of food sold in school canteens. The review included a survey of school canteens and a number of consultative forums.

The recommendations from the review have been used to inform the development of a new policy and set of standards for food in schools from 2007. The policy and standards cover the food sold in school canteens as well as all areas where the principal is directly responsible for the supply of food and drinks – for example, classroom rewards, school camps and excursions.

## What are the benefits of healthy eating?

Good foods give children and adolescents all the nutrients they need to:

- grow and develop
- concentrate and learn well at school
- stay healthy throughout childhood and in adult life.

## What's missing in the diets of many children?

- Fruits and vegetables – Many children eat very small amounts of these foods.
- A healthy breakfast – Skipping breakfast often leads to snacking on sugary and fatty foods later in the day and leads to poor concentration.
- Dairy products – Many children are not getting two to three serves of milk, cheese or yoghurt to meet their daily calcium needs.
- Drinking enough water – Water is the best thirst quencher.

## What is being eaten now?

- Too many fatty, sugary and salty foods are being eaten now. These include crisps, hot chips, pastries, biscuits, chocolates and lollies as well as fizzy drinks. These foods and drinks lack adequate nutritional value, are high in saturated fat and sugars and can contribute excess energy.
- A poor diet robs children of their vitality and makes it hard for them to concentrate at school. Too many high kilojoule foods and large portions combined with little exercise and physical activity can lead to children becoming overweight or obese.

## What is a balanced canteen menu?

A balanced canteen menu in schools is:

- having available every day and promoting a wide range of the foods that should make up the majority of a healthy diet (GREEN)
- having available only sometimes, choosing healthier alternatives and avoiding large serving sizes of foods that should be eaten in moderation (AMBER)
- not making available foods that do not meet specified minimum nutrient criteria (RED).

## Examples of healthy menus

### Recess choices

Reduced fat cheese with crackers  
Dried fruit  
Fruit buns  
Fruit salad  
Frozen fruit pieces  
Plain popcorn  
Salad  
Muffin based mini pizzas  
Small fruit muffins  
Toasted jaffles with healthy fillings

### Lunch choices

Sandwich/rolls/wraps/focaccias – with plenty of healthy fillings including plenty of salad  
Hot baked potatoes with a range of healthy fillings  
Reduced fat burgers and kebabs with salad  
Soups with crusty rolls  
Salad boxes  
Sushi  
Reduced fat/salt pasta dishes  
Noodle and rice dishes  
Fresh fruit cups with reduced fat yoghurt  
Reduced fat milks, 100% fruit juices and water  
Reduced fat ice-creams

## Support healthy food choices in school

- Talk with your children about the importance of healthy food choices.
- Pack healthy food in lunch boxes and only provide treats occasionally.
- Provide ideas for your school canteen.
- Help out in the canteen or on the committee if you can.
- Join in healthy fundraising activities in your school.

## Want more information?

To find out more about healthy changes in public schools contact (08) 9264 4999.

## What's on the menu in schools?

The table below provides examples of GREEN, AMBER and RED foods under the new standards for public schools. This is not the entire list of available foods. Your school will also have a policy about nuts and nut spreads.

GREEN	Examples
<b>Fill the menu</b>	
Breads	A variety of bread types
Cereal foods	Wholegrain cereals, pasta, noodles, rice
Vegetables	Vegetables and salads (reduced fat dressing only), all salad mixtures
Fruit	Fresh, frozen and tinned (in natural juices)
Legumes	Tinned (eg bean mix, kidney beans), cooked
Reduced fat dairy products	Reduced fat: milk (plain and flavoured), yoghurt (fresh, frozen, plain or fruit), cheese
Lean meat, fish, poultry and alternatives	All lean meats, chicken (no skin) or registered meats,* fish (eg tuna, salmon, sardines), and egg
Sandwich fillings	All lean meats, lean chicken, fish, creamed corn/corn kernels, egg, canned spaghetti (reduced salt), salads, baked beans, low fat cheese, hommos, vegemite, yeast spreads and fish spreads*
Hot food	Jaffles/hot rolls/toasted sandwiches (fillings as for sandwich fillings), baked potatoes, rice, soups, toast, English muffins, crumpets (wholemeal), raisin toast, and meals meeting the criteria for registration such as curry and rice and pasta dishes
Snacks	Yoghurt, scones, raisin or fruit bread, pikelets, cheese sticks, bread sticks, bruschetta, water crackers, rice cakes, rice crackers, popcorn (plain/low fat/flavoured), dried fruit, seed packs, trail mix based on breakfast cereals, registered snacks *
Drinks	Water, reduced fat milk, fresh fruit milkshakes, soy, 100% fruit juice (small size), plain mineral water
AMBER	Examples
<b>Select carefully and limit</b>	
Breakfast cereals	Refined cereals with added sugars
Full fat dairy foods	Milk, yoghurt, custard, low fat dairy desserts and cheese
Savoury commercial products	Registered products such as ovenable fish/chicken/potato portions should be chosen because they are lower in fat/salt*
Snack foods bars	Registered products such as breakfast bars, cereal bars and fruit bars*
Savoury snacks	Registered products such as oven baked vege chips, garlic or herb bread (lightly spread)*
Cakes, muffins and sweet biscuits	Registered products such as cakes, muffins and biscuits (reduced fat and/or sugar and based on wholemeal flour)*
Ice-creams, ice blocks, fruit based icepoles, slushes	Registered ice-creams, milk based ice confectionery, frozen yoghurts and rice cream*
Drinks	Fruit drinks, mineral waters flavoured with fruit juice, low joule cordials
RED	Examples
<b>Off the menu</b>	
Sugar and artificially sweetened drinks	Soft drinks, artificially sweetened soft drinks, energy drinks, cordials, sports drinks and mineral waters flavoured with sugar, high caffeine drinks (eg drinks containing guarana)
Confectionery	All types, caramelised popcorn
Pastry items	All types that do not meet the criteria for registration
Sandwich meats	High fat sandwich meats including polony (devon) and salami
Deep fried foods	All types
Savoury snacks	Crisps, chips and other similar products that do not meet the criteria for registration
Ice-creams	Chocolate coated and premium ice-creams
Sandwich fillings	Honey, jam, chocolate spreads, confectionery sprinkles
Cakes, muffins and sweet pastries	Croissants, doughnuts, cream filled buns/cakes, sweet pastries, slices

\* Meets the criteria for Star Choice registration