

Donating Healthy and Safe Food

Everyone has the right to access healthy and safe food.

Read on for information on how to choose the most nutritious and safest food.



Choose healthy food

When grocery shopping, try using the % Daily Value (%DV) found on the Nutrition Facts Table to compare packaged and canned products.

- Look for products that have 5% DV or less of sodium and total fat.
- Look for products that have 15% DV or more of fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron.
- Go to the Health Unit's Healthy Eating section at www.healthunit.org for more information on choosing healthy food at the grocery store.

Vegetables & Fruit

- canned vegetables, tomato products and soup with no added salt or the lowest sodium content
- canned fruit packed in water or fruit juice, rather than syrup
- whole fruit instead of juice when possible, or 100% fruit juice instead of fruit beverages, drinks or cocktails
- unsweetened apple sauce
- plain, unsweetened dried fruit such as raisins, apricots etc. instead of fruit leathers and "fruit" candies
- vegetable juice with lower sodium

Grain Products

- products that have the words "whole grain" as the first ingredient in the list; for example, "whole grain wheat"
- fresh bread products (such as bread, bagels, English muffins, and buns) higher in fibre and lower in sodium
- hot and cold cereal made with whole grains that have at least 4 grams of fibre and 8 grams or less of sugar per 30 gram serving
- crackers made with whole grains and that are higher in fibre and lower in fat and sodium
- granola bars made with whole grain, higher in fibre and less than 8 grams of sugar per 30 gram bar
- brown rice and whole wheat pasta

Protein Foods

- 2% MF (milk fat) or less for milk, evaporated milk and yogurt
- 20% MF or less for cheeses
- dry milk powder can be added to foods to increase the amount of calcium, vitamin D and protein
- vitamins and minerals in fortified soya beverage equal those in cow's milk; look for "unsweetened" varieties to cut back on added sugar
- lower sodium canned meat and fish products; look for fish canned in water
- canned baked beans that are lower in sugar and sodium
- dried or plain canned beans, lentils, chickpeas that are lower in sodium
- dry roasted, no-salt added nuts and seeds
- peanut butter and other nut butters such as almond butter

Choose Safe Food

Food banks must follow food safety legislation and cannot accept the following food products:

- food with missing identifying labels
- severely dented cans
- foods damaged in floods or fires
- food that has been partially consumed or has signs of spoilage or contamination
- home canned food products (because of the risk of botulism from improper processing)
- wild game or uninspected meat
- unpasteurized milk products and juices
- food prepared at home or in uninspected kitchens

Important note: Expiry dates and best before dates are not the same. Please do not donate:

- food products that are past the expiry dates
- foods products that are more than one year past the best before date
- food products that show any signs of spoilage

Nutritious foods that have been prepared or cooked in an inspected food business can be donated to community food programs as long as the food can meet these conditions:

- has not been partially consumed
- is in food grade packaging
- is clearly identified with labels and ingredients
- has not been contaminated
- does not show signs of thawing
- has not been previously reheated
- has been stored in either a refrigerator at 4°C or lower or frozen at -18°C
- is cooked food that is maintained hot at 60°C or higher until served

Many food banks appreciate financial donations. If you choose to donate food contact a food bank in your community to learn what products they need and what equipment they have to safely store fresh or frozen food.



Household food insecurity means not having enough money to buy healthy food.¹ Living with food insecurity means not getting enough of the vitamins, minerals and food energy needed for health. People living with food insecurity consume fewer vegetables and fruit, milk and milk alternatives and sometimes meat and meat alternatives.²

People who cannot afford healthy food are more likely to become ill and need more health services.³ Donating safe and healthy food can meet an immediate need but it does not impact food insecurity. The solutions to food insecurity include:

- enough income
- access to affordable housing, daycare and transportation
- opportunities for safe and consistent work
- opportunities for an education.⁴

For more information see the [Health Unit's infographic](#). Share the information with others.

¹ PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. Home Page. <http://proof.utoronto.ca/> Accessed 3 July 2018

² Kirkpatrick, S.I. & Tarasuk V. [Food insecurity is associated with nutrient inadequacies among Canadian adults and adolescents](#). The Journal of Nutrition; 138: 604–612, 2008. accessed 3 July 2018

³ PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research . [The Impact of Food Insecurity on Health](#). Accessed 3 July 2018

⁴ Public Health Agency of Canada. 2013. [What Makes Canadians Healthy or Unhealthy?](#) Accessed 3 July 2018