



**your
choice**

to healthy living

Highland Council and NHS Highland

**do
roghainn-sa**
beatha fhallain

school snack guidance

School Snack Guidance

This guidance is designed to help you make decisions about the kind of snacks that you wish to sell. It can also be used by parents and pupils to decide on healthier snacks to take to school.

Why Health Snacks matter?

1. The growth in calories eaten as snacks makes a major contribution to obesity.
2. Frequent snacking on some foods can cause tooth decay.
3. Snacks high in saturated fat or salt contribute to heart disease and strokes.
4. A lack of fruit and vegetables increases the risk of heart disease, stroke and cancer.
5. Some researchers believe that some food additives can affect behaviour and concentration.
6. Too many high sugar or low fibre snacks leads to rapid changes in blood sugar that can affect behaviour.

Interpreting ingredient lists

You can tell a lot about how healthy a snack is just by looking at the ingredients list. Ingredients are listed with the largest ingredients (by weight) first, and the smallest ingredient last. Foods where the first ingredient is fat, oil, sugar or syrup are unlikely to be very healthy snacks. Snacks with long ingredient lists and lots of food “additives” are unlikely to be very “natural” foods, and are often not very healthy.

Interpreting the Nutritional information

Most snacks now give a nutritional information panel. This should tell you about the calories, protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars, sodium (salt) and dietary fibre. Sometimes the panel tells you more (eg: any vitamins or minerals), and sometimes it tells you less (ignoring the sodium, fibre or sugar content). It is best to look at the “per 100g” figure rather than the “per serving”. This will make it easier to compare one snack with another. A snack that is relatively low in fat, sugar and sodium, or relatively high in fibre, has the potential to be a healthier snack (compared to snacks most often eaten by children). The scoring system shown on the next page will help you interpret the nutritional information.

Drinks

The school snack scoring system is not intended to be applied to drinks. Healthy drinks include water, semi-skimmed milk, and pure fruit juice. Diluting juices and fizzy drinks are not recommended. The acidity can cause dental erosion, they are low in nutritional value and they often contain added sugar, preservatives, artificial sweeteners or colours.

Snacking frequency and oral health

Children should be encouraged to avoid having more than 5 meal or snack occasions each day. This is to give the teeth a chance to recover between each “assault” of sugar and acid.



Traffic Light Scoring System

This system uses a “Traffic light” system of snacks rated as:

1. “Red”– 7 points or under (avoid)
2. “Amber”– 8 or 9 points (consider)
3. or “Green”- 10 or more (recommended)

The following tables shows how to use different nutrients to score these points Simply score points against each nutrient, and add up the total score for each product:

Nutrient	% Limits (or g per 100g)	Points
Saturated fat	Over 10%	Automatically “red rated”
Sodium	Over 0.7%	Automatically “red rated”
Fat	10% or less	5
Fat	Between 10.1% and 20%	2
Fat	Above 20%	0
Added sugars/syrups	Free from added sugar	3 (e.g.: fruit/dried fruit)
Sugar (natural+added)	Under 10%	3
Sugar (natural+added)	Between 10 and 25%	1 (unless free from added sugar)
Sugar (natural+added)	Over 25%	0 (unless free from added sugar)
Fibre	Less than 3%	0
Fibre	Between 3 and 5.9 %	2
Fibre	6% or more	3
Sodium	0.1% or less	3
Sodium	Between 0.1 and 0.3 %	2
Sodium	More than 0.3%	0

An example of a snack that has already been scored, is shown below:

Jordans Fruesli Bar – wild berry flavour.

Nutrient	Nutrient content per 100g	Score
Saturated fat	2.1 (under 10)	Pass
Sodium	0.03 (under 0.1)	Pass and 3 points
Fat	9.2 (under 10)	5 points
Sugars (total)	38.2 (over 25)	0 points
Added sugar	Yes	0 points
Fibre	5.2 (between 3 and 6)	2 points
		Total: 10 – Green rating

Examples of some “Green rated” and “Amber rated” Snacks.

Green snacks include fresh or dried fruit, raw salad and vegetables, nuts and seeds, wholemeal toast and Jordans Fruesli bar.

Amber snacks include Nairns wheat free berry flavour biscuits, white toast, Kelloggs Nutritigrain bar, Jordans Crunchy bar, Unsalted “naked” potato heads, fruit yogurts and Highland Council’s reduced fat “healthier baking” cakes and muffins, Tradecraft Geobars, Jacobs Thai bites, Ryvita Tondos and Quaker seasons.

(Note: This is not an exhaustive list. It is just a list of a few examples.)

How to score snacks

1. Make a table with 8 rows and 3 columns, following the example given at the bottom of this page.
2. Note the name of the food at the top of the score sheet.
3. Copy the nutrients headings into column 1, as shown in the example.
4. Add the figures from the nutrition panel shown on the packet of the snack in question, into column 2. Make sure you are using the “per 100g” figures, rather than the “per serving” figures.
5. Check the saturated fat and sodium levels. High levels are automatically rated “red”.
6. You know if it is free from “added sugar/syrup” from the ingredients list. You know the “sugar” level (natural and added) from the nutrition panel. Only score “sugar (natural + added)”, if snack contains added sugar.
7. Score all other categories, writing the scores into column 3.
8. Add the scores together to a total, and record your snack as a red, amber or green snack, depending on the total score.

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What to do with amber snacks

Before you decide to sell any amber snacks, we suggest you consider the following questions. These questions will help you decide if you are happy to sell the amber rated snack. Members of the SNAG group, school board or pupil council should be able to answer these.

Positive questions for amber snacks

1. Does the snack introduce children to a new kind of taste or texture?
2. Does the snack make children think about their health?
3. Is the snack particularly rich in important nutrients like vitamins or minerals?
4. Does it contain Fairly Traded ingredients (with the fair trade logo)?
5. Will students/pupils eat the snack?
6. Is the snack convenient and affordable?
7. Is it locally or organically produced?
8. Will the packaging create waste disposal problems?

Negative questions for amber snacks

1. How might the snack affect teeth?
2. Are you concerned that the food is highly processed or unnatural?
3. Does the packing mislead by implementing it is healthier than it is?
4. Does the snack contain food additives that might affect behaviour?*

*Some researchers believe that artificial food colourings, benzoate preservatives flavour enhancer: monosodium glutamate (621); and aspartame (an artificial sweetener) can lead to problems with behaviour and concentration in some people. Others claim there is no link. However, no food needs to contain these food additives and a cautious approach would be not to sell foods containing any of them.

Now you have tested your amber snack against these positive and negative questions, you are in a position to decide whether or not it is fit for sale.

For tuck shop provision, we recommend that at least 50% of the products on sale and on display are "green rated" snacks, and that schools do not sell any "red rated" snacks. If the purchasing of green snacks poor, we recommend that some of the "competing" amber snacks are removed.

Food safety and labelling laws

If you have any food safety concerns, Highland Council's Environmental Health team provides advice on food hygiene requirements for tuckshops. They can provide training materials such as guidance leaflets and handwash demonstration kits. Officers can also advise on labelling requirements. Environmental Health Offices are located throughout the Highlands. You can contact them through your local Highland Council Service Point.

For further information on healthy snacks, contact Dave Rex, Child Health Lead Dietitian, NHS Highland or have a look at the following websites:

www.food.gov.uk (Food Standards Agency web site, good for advice on packed lunches, snacks and food hygiene)

www.fabresearch.org (For more about food and behaviour research)

www.foodcomm.org (The food commission web site has good resources on food additives and labelling)

www.fairtrade.org.uk (Information about "fair trade" products and principles)

Email contacts:

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