



# Healthy food and drink choices in schools

**GREEN**  
Fill the  
menu



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

**AMBER**  
Select  
carefully



*Acknowledgement NSW Health*

**RED**  
Off the  
menu



## Health promoting schools

### Schools can make a difference

They are in an ideal position to promote and maintain the health of children, young people, school staff and the wider community.

According to the Health Promoting Schools Framework initiated by the World Health Organisation, a health promoting school is one that is based on a social model of health. This model takes into account the physical, and social and emotional needs of all members of the school community. Together, members work towards providing students with positive experiences and structures that promote and protect their health.

Components of a health promoting school:

- ✓ Health education curriculum
- ✓ Health services
- ✓ Health environment
- ✓ Physical education
- ✓ Food services
- ✓ Health promotion for staff and parents
- ✓ Counselling and psychological programs
- ✓ School and community health events

#### Source:

*School Health Coalition, 1996*

Schools can create an environment that promotes learning and teaches good eating and physical activity patterns for long-term health. They can also provide an opportunity to practise these healthy habits.

Principals are encouraged to promote consistent messages about healthy lifestyles in all school activities.

The policy and standards for healthy food and drinks applies to:

- ✓ canteens and food services
- ✓ classroom rewards
- ✓ excursions and camps
- ✓ classroom cooking activities.

Frequently asked questions and answers on the policy can be found at: [det.wa.edu.au/healthyfoodanddrink](http://det.wa.edu.au/healthyfoodanddrink)

For many schools moving to a healthy food environment means a number of changes across the whole school site. This process is best planned and managed by a health committee. Let the school community know about the committee in the school newsletter. Call for new members and explain the advantages of committee membership.

The committee structure should have representation from all sections of the school community. This allows the different views and ideas to be considered and the responsibility for various aspects of management to be shared.

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The committee could include:

- ✓ the school principal
- ✓ the canteen or food service manager
- ✓ canteen/food service volunteers
- ✓ parent representative(s)
- ✓ School Council representative
- ✓ student representatives
- ✓ Healthy school coordinator
- ✓ school nurse
- ✓ home economics teacher
- ✓ physical education teacher
- ✓ school psychologist

The committee oversees the implementation of the *Healthy Food and Drink* policy across all school activities.

The committee may:

- ✓ develop a strategy for communicating to the whole school community
- ✓ develop an action plan for the implementation of the *Healthy Food and Drink* policy
- ✓ discuss how the strategy applies to a range of current school activities such as the canteen, fundraising, camps, classroom activities and excursions
- ✓ encourage communication between different groups in the school regarding implementation of the *Healthy Food and Drink* policy.

Many schools have already made significant efforts to promote healthy lifestyle choices. If you believe your school is already an exemplary example or is well on the way to adopting healthy food and drink choices, please contact the department's Media Officer on 9264 4857 to discuss whether some positive media coverage can be arranged.

Other initiatives that can assist in creating a healthy school environment include:

### 1. Theme days

Promote a health/nutrition campaign/event that is happening in the community. For example, Heart Week, Fruit and Veg Week, or Crunch & Sip.

Ask classes to design and run school-wide activities that promote awareness of this health/nutrition issue.

Some ideas for promoting a health/nutrition message include:

- ✓ a dress up or colour day (eg red for Heart Week)
- ✓ design a poster competition to promote a health/nutritional message
- ✓ cook off competition using a particular food or ingredient
- ✓ team events (eg Climb to Everest)
- ✓ information in the school newsletter
- ✓ ask the canteen to support the theme day by preparing and promoting relevant foods
- ✓ contact your local newspaper using a media release. (Contact the Media Officer, Corporate Communications and Marketing on 9264 4857 for more information.)

### 2. Whole-of-school healthy breakfasts

Ask local businesses to donate foods (or offer foods at a discounted price), and hold a whole-of-school breakfast.

For example, approach the local bakery, fruit shop, dairy association and supermarket. The canteen manager may be able to suggest who is best to approach.

Organisations that provide support can be thanked in school publications and sent certificates of appreciation.

Alternatively, allocate classes different responsibilities for providing foods and making breakfast, or charge a small fee to help with the costs.

Start the day with a morning activity session before the breakfast, for example aerobics, a brisk walk, 'Jump Rope for Heart' activities, a fun run or other games. Invite local sporting identities to conduct activity sessions.

Discuss with teachers the development of follow-up activities in class.

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### 3. Staff health promotion

The promotion of staff health and wellbeing can be an important component of a health promoting school.

There are many possible activities which can involve staff including:

- ✓ Approach community health agencies for assistance to organise blood pressure and/or cholesterol checks.
- ✓ Invite the local dietitian to speak at a staff meeting or special seminar.
- ✓ Set up a 'Nutrition Newsboard'. Pin up information about nutrition and encourage staff to bring in their favourite recipes. Strategically place the newsboard above a school photocopier, so staff can copy information and recipes. Newsboards can also be placed in the administration reception area and library for visitor information.
- ✓ Organise a practical workshop on stress management and relaxation techniques. While this is not specifically a nutrition initiative, helping staff to prevent and manage stress can have an impact on their energy and enthusiasm towards teaching and the promotion of other health initiatives.

For information about other worksite health promotion activities which may interest school staff, contact the Heart Foundation.

### 4. Parent education and involvement

Health and nutrition messages learnt by children at school can be reinforced in the home environment. Examples of parent education and ways that parents could become involved in school activities include:

- ✓ Conduct a parent education evening or series of evenings. Present an overview of the health curriculum and invite a guest speaker. Parents may be interested to learn about how their own nutrition behaviours impact upon their health and influence their children's health. The school nurse and community health centre staff are valuable resources who can assist school staff to coordinate and run parent education. Ask parents about other health topics that they would like to learn more about in future education evenings.

- ✓ Invite parents to volunteer healthy cooking sessions in classrooms.
- ✓ Organise for the Western Australian School Canteen Association to present a workshop on healthy lunchbox ideas for parents at your school and encourage parents to attend (for further information contact the WA School Canteen Association on 9264 4999).
- ✓ Invite parents to participate in whole-of-school health promotion events such as Heart Week, Fruit and Veg Week, or Crunch & Sip.
- ✓ Use the school newsletter to keep parents informed of health promotion events and encourage their involvement.
- ✓ Include recipes from the Western Australian School Canteen Association website [waschoolcanteens.org.au](http://waschoolcanteens.org.au) in school newsletters. (Don't forget to acknowledge the source!).

### 5. Encouraging the active participation of students

This is very important to the ongoing success of the school canteen.

Consider conducting a 'name the canteen' competition.

Students could be involved in making a sign of the canteen name and designing artwork to display in or around the canteen.

Students can be involved in a variety of other ways and the school's student body can help to identify these.

Some examples include surveying fellow students, developing promotional materials, drafting letters to parents and conducting taste tests.

