

# LIVING HEALTHY

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DECEMBER, 2010

WESTERN HEALTH/ WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

## HEALTHY CHRISTMAS SNACKS

The Western District's Nutrition Policy states that special occasions in schools should reflect healthier food choices. At the discretion of the principal, some flexibility is permitted with special occasion foods served up to a maximum of three times per school year. Here are some healthy options for Christmas:

Santa Smoothies: Blend a banana, fruit cup, yogurt, strawberries, 100% fruit juice.

Fruit and Veggie Skewers: red apples, green grapes, red and green pepper pieces, strawberries, fresh cherries, honey dew cubes, kiwi slices, sliced radishes, broccoli flowerets, mozzarella cheese cubes. Make skewers using various red and green fruits, veggies, and a few small cheese cubes.

Holiday Fruit Wreath: green fruit (sliced kiwi, green grapes, honey dew melon) and red fruit (strawberries, red grapes, pomegranate). Arrange green fruit in the shape of a wreath and then decorate with red fruit. Place a container of yogurt for dipping in the center.

Holiday Pita Chips with Salsa: Whole grain pita bread cut into wedges and baked in the oven until lightly browned and crispy. Serve with low fat dips such as hummus, yogurt, guacamole, or salsa.

## INQUIRIES ON FOOD GUIDELINES – WHAT FITS & WHAT DOESN'T?

Principals, teachers, caterers, and parents may be a little unsure about the Provincial School Food Guidelines and which food and beverage items actually fit. Lots of inquiries have come in as to whether a certain food item meets the guidelines. For example, people have asked about Poutine which is not considered a healthy choice and should not be served in schools.

We welcome inquiries from schools. If a caterer, teacher, principal, or parent would like to inquire about a particular food or beverage item, please email me at [bill.allan@wnlsd.ca](mailto:bill.allan@wnlsd.ca). I will get an answer for you as quickly as possible.

## MIXED MESSAGES ON HEALTHY EATING

School caterers, teachers, and principals have worked hard to stress the importance of healthy eating. When unhealthy fast-food lunches are sent to school from home, students receive mixed messages. To help with this, some suggestions were recently offered by caterers:

1. **Host an information session for parents** on Healthy Eating Messages. (We hope to have this ready for Curriculum Night in September, 2011.)
2. **Send home a memo to parents** asking them to limit unhealthy food to one day per week. Here is a [Sample Parent Memo](#) if you wish to use that.
3. **Make a daily announcement about a healthy lunch special** in the school cafeteria. This is one advantage schools have over fast-food takeouts.
4. One school **set up a table for drop-off lunches** and asked parents to place lunches there (with name on it) and wait for their son or daughter to pick it up. The number of unhealthy lunches dropped off significantly.

## BRAND NAME FOOD LIST

To help schools provide healthy food choices, a [Brand Name Food List](#) is available. This list has a variety of supermarket foods classified as Serve Most (healthy choices), Serve Moderately, or Not Included (not so healthy) to help food providers & parents with healthy choices. This list is updated every three months. If you wish to see where a particular food or beverage item fits, you can ask for a [Food and Beverage Review](#) with this one-page form.

## HEALTHY LUNCH IDEAS

School caterers recently met to discuss food & beverage choices in schools. A list of healthy lunches was brainstormed. Check out the [Sample Two Week Menu](#) for new ideas.

## WHAT'S SHAKING WITH SODIUM? REDUCING YOUR RISK!

Did you know that reducing sodium (salt) in the diet of Canadians would likely mean lower blood pressure, fewer strokes, and less heart and kidney disease? It could also prevent up to 23,500 cardiovascular events annually and generate close to \$3 billion in health care savings in Canada!! With this in mind, Health Canada has been working diligently on a [Sodium Reduction Strategy](#) to help empower Canadians to make healthier choices.

Canadian adults consume an average of 3092 mg of sodium daily, but the amount of sodium considered adequate to promote good health in adults is only half that amount, 1500 mg per day. Health Canada recommends that adults do not exceed 2300 mg of sodium per day.

It's difficult, however, to cut salt on your own. That's because most of the sodium consumed comes from pre-packaged foods and meals purchased outside the home. To reduce sodium consumption, choose these foods less often. Try to avoid adding salt to food. (One teaspoon of salt contains about 2400 mg of sodium.)

Here are a few tips to help make healthy choices when it comes to sodium:

1. Choose *more fresh, unprocessed foods* instead of pre-packaged, convenience foods. Fresh fruit and vegetables are higher in potassium which is a factor in reducing the risk of high blood pressure.

2. *Read Nutrition Labels* to make informed food choices. Check the percentage of the daily value (%DV) for Sodium. Use the %DV to compare food products. Try to avoid products with over 400 mg of sodium per serving. Look for foods with claims such as "salt-free", "low in sodium", or "reduced in sodium". Watch out for soups, processed meats, and sauces that are often loaded with sodium.

3. *Pizza, sandwiches, burgers, and hot dogs* account for almost 20% of Canada's sodium consumption. One slice of pepperoni pizza can contain up to 1770 mg of sodium, 118% of the recommended daily intake. *Eat less of these meals.*

4. Check the [Nutritional Information for Fast Food Restaurants](#). An adequate intake of 1500 mg of sodium per day implies around 500 mg of sodium per meal.

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## RADIO AD CONTEST FOR NATIONAL NON-SMOKING WEEK

Last month, students were invited to develop 30 second radio ads and present them to their class. Class entries could be played over the school's P.A. system with one entry then chosen to represent the school. Participating teachers are asked to send in a CD, tape, or emailed audio file of their jingle, rap, rant, song, or advertisement to Bill Allan by **Friday, December 10**. In January, we will choose five ads to represent the Western District.

Each of the teachers of the five classes selected with these winning ads shall receive a \$200 prize to promote healthy living in the school and a pool, skating, or bowling party for the class. Students will also have a chance to have their message broadcast on CBC or Rogers Cable during National Non-Smoking Week from January 17 – 22. Teachers can find all the information they need on our [Radio Ad Contest Web Site](#).

All grade levels are invited to participate. To ensure that the Smoke Free message gets out to the students in each school, the principal could ask for **at least one teacher** to have their class participate. This could be a great fit in Language Arts, Health, or Drama and a great way to spread the message. Let's spread the word!

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## SCHOOL WALKING CLUBS – FEELIN' GOOD!

In last month's newsletter, we mentioned the idea of School Walking Clubs as a means to help students and teachers keep active and reduce stress. The walks could be done at lunch time, before or after school, or in the evening.

To encourage schools to start walking clubs, the names of participating schools will be put in the hat each month for a draw. The school that is chosen each month will receive a \$100 cash prize to go towards the promotion of healthy living in the school. A great activity for student and teacher wellness with five \$100 prizes! **If your school has started a walking club, e-mail me by December 10 at [bill.allan@wnlsd.ca](mailto:bill.allan@wnlsd.ca)** . A draw for \$100 will be held in early December for those schools that have started.

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