

Nutrition and Community Meals

Why is nutrition important for community meals?

- Many people rely on community meals and emergency food for a significant portion of their diet
- People living with low income are at higher risk of developing chronic diseases, such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes
- Diets high in whole grains, vegetables and fruit, beans and legumes lower the risk of chronic and infectious diseases
- Diets high in added sugar, salt & saturated fat increase the risk of chronic & infectious diseases

Suggestions

1. Offer food choices from each of the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide.
 - a. Vegetables and fruit
 - i. Offer fruit at each meal
 - ii. Offer at least one cooked vegetable and one raw vegetable or salad
 - iii. Choose orange and dark green vegetables more often
 - b. Grain products
 - i. Offer at least 50% whole grain products
 - ii. Try whole wheat pasta, brown rice, wild rice and oatmeal
 - c. Milk and alternatives
 - i. Offer milk, instead of coffee whitener
 - d. Meat and alternatives
 - i. Offer vegetarian options including beans, chickpeas, lentils
2. Provide alternatives for people with food allergies, or for ethical, health, or religious reasons, whenever possible
3. Provide nutritious soft food alternatives for people who are not able to chew properly

To lower the salt:

- Season foods with herbs and spices instead of salt
- When serving canned beans or vegetables, choose no salted added brands
- Choose less processed and convenience foods whenever possible

To lower the added sugar:

- Have jugs of cold water available, instead of fruit punch
- If offering juice, offer 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- Offer fresh fruit for dessert

Sample Meal Ideas

Note: Additional meal choices could be offered if funds available

Whole grain cereal, fruit, yogurt

Sandwiches (made with whole grain bread and roast meat), cucumber slices, green beans, oranges, milk

Chili (made with no salt added canned tomatoes & beans), whole grain bread, carrots, apples, milk

Tuna pasta casserole (made with whole wheat pasta, celery & mushrooms), salad, bananas, milk

Middlesex-London Health Unit (2016)

Adapted from:

Nutrition Suggestions for Community Funded Meals (Peterborough Food Action Network, 2013)