



Minimum nutritional standards for catering in health and social care

Draft for Consultation

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1 Executive summary

The importance of a balanced diet in promoting good health is well known. Due to rising levels of obesity, and the associated negative impacts on the health and well-being of the population, in Northern Ireland it remains imperative to promote and provide healthier food choices. As part of the implementation of *A Fitter Future for All 2012-22*¹ (the regional obesity prevention strategy), the issue of food provision within health and social care settings has been highlighted as an important area for development, both in terms of food provided to patients and clients throughout healthcare facilities, and in leading system change and modelling good practice that will improve standards across Northern Ireland and help shift the norm of food offerings to become healthier. Through the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group the Public Health Agency, Food Standards Agency and **safe food** have jointly produced minimum nutritional standards for catering in Health and Social Care. These are summarised below and presented in more detail throughout the document.

Currently there is a wealth of valuable work underway within Health and Social Care Trusts to encourage healthier eating amongst staff and visitors. It is intended that these standards will build on and strengthen these efforts at a regional level.

A key objective of the Fitter Future for All strategy is that '*nutritional standards are in place for staff and visitors in Health and Social Care (HSC) settings and across local government including guidance on procurement and provision.*' It is anticipated that, in time, these nutritional standards will also be rolled out across local government and across the wider public sector. The standards are food based standards modelled on the *Eatwell Guide*. They will apply to all facilities that serve food and/or beverages to staff and visitors operating within Health and Social Care settings including catering facilities as well as private retail and vending machines. They should be adhered to when food contracts are being specified in the procurement process and should also be applied when planning menus.

¹ Department of Health SSaPS. *A Fitter Future for all. Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022*. Belfast: 2012.

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The minimum nutritional standards for catering in health and social care have been based on Public Health England's (PHE) document "Healthier and More Sustainable Catering: A toolkit for serving food to adults" The authors wish to thank colleagues in PHE for permission to use and adapt the toolkit used in England, and also thank them for support and advice, particularly Dr Louis Levy and also Jane Crossley Department of Health.

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3 Minimum nutritional standards in health and social care

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

- Higher fibre starchy options must be available at all meal times. (E.g. brown rice, wholemeal pasta, potatoes with skins).
- At least 50 per cent of breakfast cereals (procured by volume) provided must be higher in fibre (i.e. more than 6g/100g) and not exceed 22.5g/100g total sugars.
- At least 50 per cent of breads provided must be higher fibre (wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, wheaten and granary) options (including all sandwiches)
- At least 50 per cent of breads, including sandwich selections, and breakfast cereals (procured by volume) must meet UK wide salt targets for industry. https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland/nutritionni/salt-ni/salt_targets

Fruit and vegetables

- At least five different types of fruit and vegetables must be available every day.
- A minimum of two vegetables must be served at each main meal service.*
- If using canned fruit and vegetable products these must meet UK wide salt targets for industry. https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland/nutritionni/salt-ni/salt_targets
- At least 50 per cent of desserts produced or procured must contain a portion of fruit, which can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen.*
- A portion of fruit must be cheaper than a portion of hot or cold dessert.*
- Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite dishes such as Bolognese sauce or curry must include a total of at least one portion of vegetables and /or fruit (this could be from a number of different fruits/vegetables).*
- When offering fruit / vegetable juice or smoothie use the smallest available pack size – 150ml of fruit /vegetable juice or smoothie counts as only one of your five a day no matter how much you drink.
- Salad dressings must be offered ‘on the side’ for at least one salad option at each service.

*The recommended portion of fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit or vegetables including salad vegetables must be served. Please see appendix (to be added)

Dairy and Alternatives

Milk and dairy foods should be offered every day and at every meal.

- Lower fat milk must be available every day.
- At least 75 per cent of milk (procured by volume) must be lower fat milks (semi skimmed, 1% fat or skimmed).
- At least 50 per cent of hard yellow cheese (procured by volume) must have a maximum total fat content of 25g/100g.
- 75 per cent of yogurts (procured by volume) must be low-fat (i.e. less than 3g fat per 100g) AND sugar must not exceed 10g per 100g.

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

- A meat or vegetarian protein source must be offered at all main meal service.
- Fish must be offered at least twice a week, one portion of which one should be oily.
- All vegetarian meals must contain a protein source. Vegetarian options must only be based on cheese in total not more than twice each week (where lunch only is served) and a maximum of four times each week (where both lunch and evening meal are served).
- Where red or processed meat is served a portion should not exceed 70g on average cooked weight.
- There must be at least two days each week without any processed meat or processed poultry products. Sandwich counters are exempt for this standard but are required to adhere to specifications in vending guidance.
- At least 50 per cent of meat and meat products must meet the UK wide salt targets for industry.https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland/nutritionni/salt-ni/salt_targets
- Meat and meat products (procured by volume) are lower in saturated fat where available

Oils and Spreads

- All cooking oils must be based on mono- or poly-unsaturated fats.
- At least 75 per cent of spreads must be based on mono- or poly-unsaturated fats.
- Choose unsaturated cooking oils

- Choose salad dressings such as soya, rapeseed, corn, sunflower and olive oils.

Other food and drink high in fat, salt and sugar

- All mayonnaise and salad creams (including those used in potato salads and coleslaws) must be either low fat, light or reduced calorie
- At least 75 per cent of pre-packed ready meals and prepared sandwiches (procured by volume) must contain less than 6g saturated fat per portion.
- At least 50 per cent of all main course options must not be deep fried, batter-coated, bread crumbed, in a creamy sauce or containing pastry. Where chips are served, they must be thick-cut and oven-baked and there must be an alternative starchy side option available that is not deep fried or coated in oil or butter. Do not add salt to chips before serving.
- There must be at least one day each week (Monday – Friday) when a high fat starchy food such as chips, wedges, garlic bread or roast potatoes are not served.
- When desserts are served, half of desserts available should contain at least 50% of their weight as fruit
- Lower fat alternatives to cream should be used in cooking e.g. low fat yogurt, very low fat crème fraîche and fromage frais or any product which is less than 10g of fat per 100g.
- Savoury snacks including crisps and nuts must only be available in the smallest commercially available packet size (ideally 30g or less). Unsalted versions must be available.
- At least 50 per cent of savoury snacks must be lower fat options.
- Baked products such as muffins and scones must be less than 60g per scone and 80g per muffin.
- No less than 80 per cent of beverages (procured by volume) must be sugar free, diet or with no added sugar.
- All sugar containing drinks must be available in the smallest single serve portion size and must not exceed 330ml.
- Confectionery, packet sweet / biscuit snacks must be available in the smallest standard single serve portion size within the market and should not exceed 250kcal.
- Traybakes and baked products e.g. muffins, scones, brownies, caramel squares must not exceed 250kcal per serving.
- Salt or salt substitutes should not be on display at tables.

4 Introduction

Evidence has shown that a healthy balanced diet with adequate amounts of physical activity can help maintain a healthy weight, and lower the risk of diseases including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) data for Northern Ireland reveals that overall the population consumes too much saturated fat, added sugars and salt and not enough fruit, vegetables, oily fish or fibre compared with current Government standards ². Worryingly, levels of obesity continue to rise with 60 per cent of adults and 28 per cent of children in Northern Ireland being overweight or obese in 2015. ³

The significant role of the workplace, and employers, in promoting healthier lifestyles and supporting staff to adopt and maintain these in relation to nutritional and other choices is increasingly recognised. As a major employer throughout the UK, the Health Service should promote and protect health and lead by example for others in the public and private sectors. Across Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland there is much valuable work ongoing locally within HSC Trusts to promote healthier eating in the workplace and encourage appropriate lifestyle choices. Healthier menus, calories on menus and vending policies are some examples of this.

To further support this work, and in line with key objectives of the regional obesity prevention strategy a *Fitter future for all 2012-22'* the Public Health Agency, Food Standards Agency and **safefood** have jointly developed minimum nutritional standards for catering in health and social care settings in Northern Ireland. These standards support those working within Health Service catering businesses who want to offer consumers a choice of affordable, healthy and sustainable food.

² Agency. PHEFS. National Diet and Nutrition Survey: results from Years one to four (combined) of the rolling programme for 2008 and 2009 to 2011 and 2012. London: 2014.

³ Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety. Health Survey Northern Ireland: First results 2014/2015 2015.

Standard development

To inform the development of the nutritional standards, a review was undertaken of the work ongoing in the other areas of the UK where nutritional standards have been successfully introduced in health service catering has been reviewed. This included the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services⁴ and supporting 'Healthier Sustainable Catering Toolkit'⁵ in England, the Scottish Government and NHS Health Scotland's Healthy Living Award (HLA)⁶ and the voluntary guidance on healthy food and drink choices for staff and visitors⁷ and Corporate Health Standard award in Wales⁸

These have been considered by the working group and in conjunction with dietetic, catering and procurement specialists from across the region have been adapted for use in Northern Ireland.

Application of the standards

These nutritional standards relate to catering for staff and visitors in HSC settings (they do not apply to patient food and beverage provision as there are already standards in place for food and beverages served to patients.) These standards apply to all facilities serving food and/or beverages operating within these settings including catering facilities, private retail units and vending machines.

The standards should be adhered to when food contracts are being specified in procurement processes and should also be applied when planning menus.

⁴ Affairs DfEFaR. Government Buying Standards. London: 2015.

⁵ England PH. Healthier and More Sustainable Catering: A Toolkit for Serving Food to Adults. London: 2014.

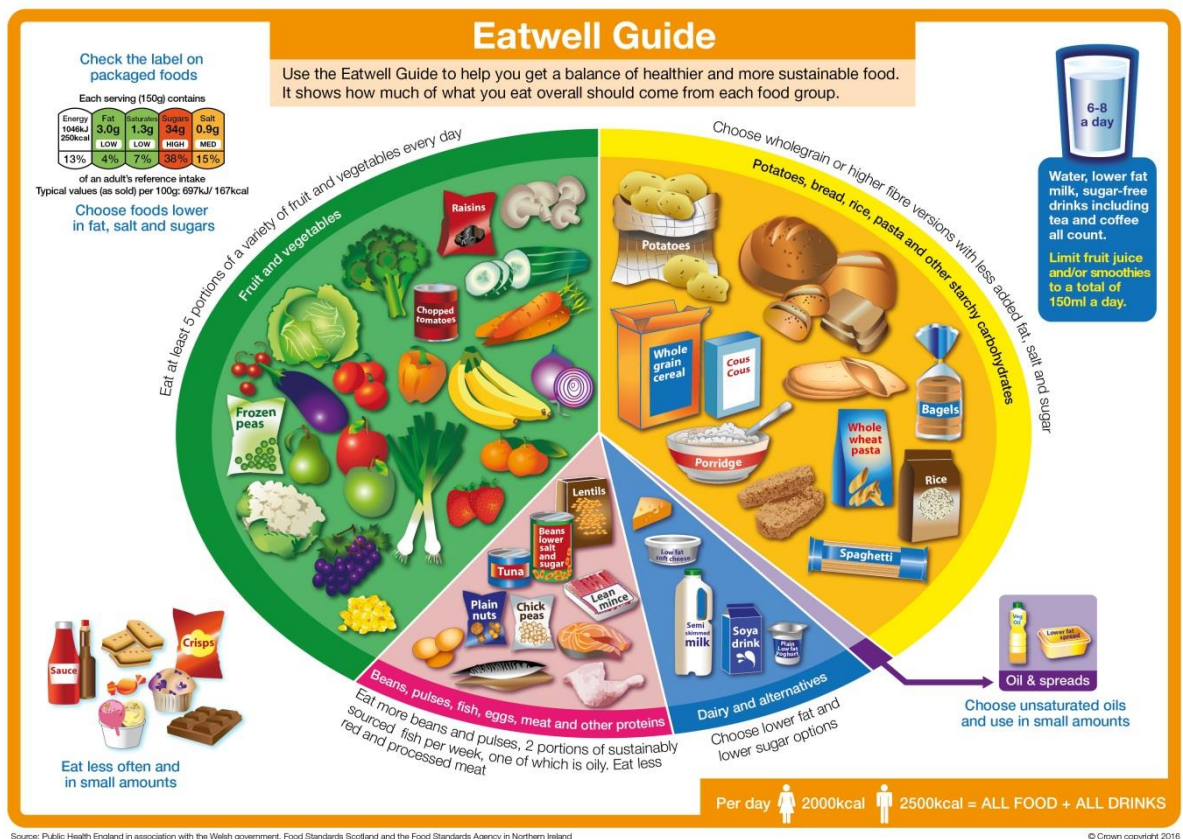
⁶ Scotland NH. Healthy Living Award. Glasgow2011 [cited 2016]; Available from: <http://www.healthylivingaward.co.uk/index>.

⁷ Government W. Supporting Healthy Food and Drink Choices for Staff and Visitors in Hospital. 2011.

⁸ Government W. Corporate Health Standard: A quality Framework and Award for Health and Well-being in the Workplace. 2016.

Food based standards

The nutritional standards for HSC catering are food based standards which have been developed around the new Eatwell Guide.⁹ Government recommendations for a healthy balanced diet are reflected in the new *Eatwell Guide*. The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland launched the refreshed Eatwell Guide locally on 17th March 2016 to replace the Eatwell plate which has been used since 2007. The new guide reflects the updated dietary recommendations on sugar, fibre and starchy carbohydrates from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) report on Carbohydrates and Health which was published in 2015.



⁹ Public Health England. The Eatwell Guide. Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland; 2016; Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>.

The *Eatwell Guide* shows the proportions of the main food groups that form a healthy, balanced diet, focusing on the following:

- Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates; choosing wholegrain versions where possible
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks); choosing lower fat and lower sugar options
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including two portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily)
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat in small amounts
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day
- If consuming foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar have these less often and in small amounts.

In addition to these messages consumers are reminded to eat less salt (no more than 6g a day for adults), to get active and be a healthy weight; it is also very important not to skip breakfast. The *Eatwell Guide* also provides information on calorie guidelines for adults and front of pack nutrition labelling.

The new *Eatwell Guide* and the booklet which explains the guide in more detail are available to download from the FSA in NI website:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section-images/finaleatwellguide23rd.jpg>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/finaleatwellguide23mar2016nothernireland23rd.pdf>

5 Minimum nutritional standards for catering in health and social care



Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	
Minimum standards	<p>Higher fibre starchy options must be available at all meal times. (E.g. brown rice, wholemeal pasta, potatoes with skins).</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of breakfast cereals (procured by volume) provided must be higher in fibre (i.e. more than 6g/100g) and not exceed 22.5g/100g total sugars.</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of breads provided must be higher fibre (wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, wheaten and granary) options (including all sandwiches)</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of breads, including sandwich selections, and breakfast cereals (procured by volume) must meet UK wide salt targets for industry. https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland/nutritionni/salt-ni/salt_targets</p>
What foods are included	<p>All breads including wholemeal, granary, brown and white bread, wheaten, soda, potato bread, pitta bread, chapattis, tortillas, paninis and bagels. Potatoes, sweet</p>

	<p>potato, squash (where sweet potato or squash are eaten as a vegetable portion to a main meal, they do not count as a starchy food)</p> <p>All breakfast cereals</p> <p>All rice, couscous, bulgar wheat, semolina, tapioca, maize, cornmeal, quinoa</p> <p>All noodles (including rice, udon, soba and egg noodles) and pasta</p> <p>Other grains e.g. oats, millet, barley, buckwheat, rye, spelt, bulgar (cracked wheat)</p>
<p>Tips on choosing</p>	<p>Bread</p> <p>Choose a variety of breads – including wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, granary and seeded to meet the standard for a 50:50 split between white and higher fibre breads.</p> <p>Look for white bread with added nutrients and fibre for customers who do not like brown or wholemeal bread.</p> <p>Flour</p> <p>Wholemeal flour can be used for some recipes or used to replace some of the white flour in a recipe.</p> <p>Breakfast cereals</p> <p>Choose fortified breakfast cereals as they can be a good source of vitamin D, folate and iron.</p> <p>Include cereals which are higher in fibre and lower in sugar to meet the standard for a 50:50 split</p> <p>Remove cereals that are high in salt and added sugar based on the FSA in NI criteria to classify foods and drinks as “low, medium or high”.</p> <p>Potatoes & potato products</p> <p>Buy products that haven’t been cooked in salt.</p> <p>When purchasing chips choose thick cut chips or wedges where possible as these products absorb less fat.</p> <p>Choose ready prepared potato products with lower salt and fat contents.</p> <p>Boiled starchy foods e.g. rice, potatoes and pasta, and grains should be cooked and served without added salt and fat.</p> <p>Rice</p>

Brown and wild rice are higher fibre alternatives.



Fruit and vegetables	
Minimum standards	<p>At least five different types of fruit and vegetables must be available every day.</p> <p>A minimum of two vegetables must be served at each main meal service.*</p> <p>If using canned fruit and vegetable products these must meet UK wide salt targets for industry. https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland/nutritionni/salt-ni/salt_targets</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of desserts produced or procured must contain a portion of fruit, which can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen.*</p> <p>A portion of fruit must be cheaper than a portion of hot or cold dessert.*</p> <p>Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite dishes such as Bolognese sauce or curry must include a total of at least one portion of vegetables and /or fruit (this could be from a number of different fruits/vegetables).*</p>

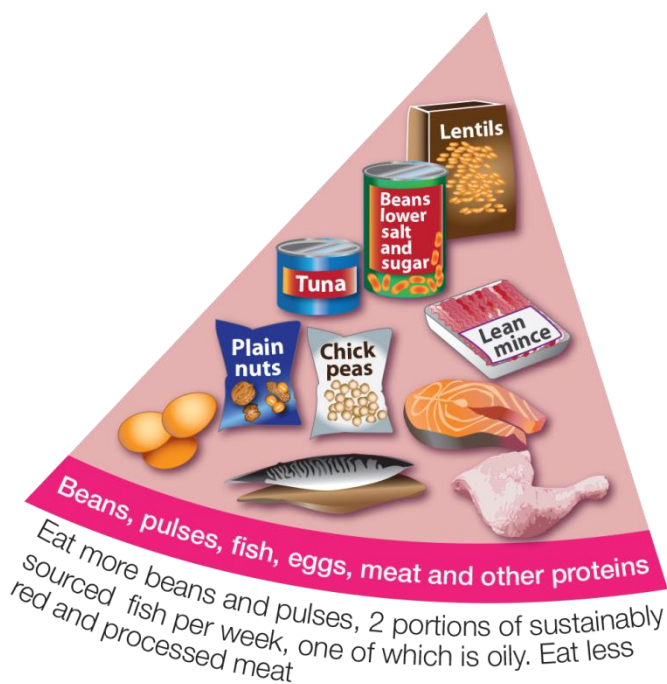
	<p>When offering fruit / vegetable juice or smoothie use the smallest available pack size – 150ml of fruit /vegetable juice or smoothie counts as only one of your five a day no matter how much you drink.</p> <p>Salad dressings must be offered ‘on the side’ for at least one salad option at each service.</p> <p>*The recommended portion of fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit or vegetables including salad vegetables must be served. Please see appendix (to be added)</p>
What foods are included	<p>All types of fresh, frozen, tinned, juiced and dried fruit.</p> <p>All types of fresh, frozen, juiced and tinned vegetables.</p> <p>Unsweetened 100% fruit and vegetable juices, smoothies limited to combined total of 150ml.</p> <p>Beans and pulses are also included but only count as a maximum of one portion per day.</p>
Tips on choosing	<p>Choose tinned fruit in juice rather than in syrup.</p> <p>Choose tinned vegetables and pulses in water, with no added salt or sugar.</p> <p>When buying vegetables choose those with no added sauces, salt or fat.</p> <p>When procuring fruit and vegetables buy a range of different types and colours to provide a variety of nutrients.</p> <p>Buy desserts that contain at least 80g of fruit per portion.</p> <p>When buying composite dishes purchase those that provide at least 80g fruit or vegetables per serving.</p> <p>Promote the use of fresh and seasonal fruit and vegetables.</p> <p>When buying fruits and vegetables grown abroad consider fair trade options.</p>

*The recommended portion of fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit or vegetables including salad vegetables must be served. Appendix to include portion sizes to be inserted.



Dairy and Alternatives	
Minimum standards	<p>Milk and dairy foods should be offered every day and at every meal.</p> <p>Lower fat milk must be available every day.</p> <p>At least 75 per cent of milk (procured by volume) must be lower fat milks (semi skimmed, 1% fat or skimmed).</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of hard yellow cheese (procured by volume) must have a maximum total fat content of 25g/100g.</p> <p>75 per cent of yogurts (procured by volume) must be low-fat (i.e. less than 3g fat per 100g) AND sugar must not exceed 10g per 100g.</p>
What foods are included	<p>All types of milk, including dried milk, reduced fat milk, goats' and sheep's milk.</p> <p>Cheeses e.g. Cheddar, cottage cheese, cheese spreads, Edam, goats' cheese, stilton.</p> <p>Yogurt (fruit or plain, whole milk or low fat), or fromage frais.</p> <p>Milk-based sauces, custard and milk puddings, fortified soya drinks and yogurts.</p>
Tips on choosing	<p>Often, products are available that are lower in fat and saturates and can easily be incorporated into the menu.</p>

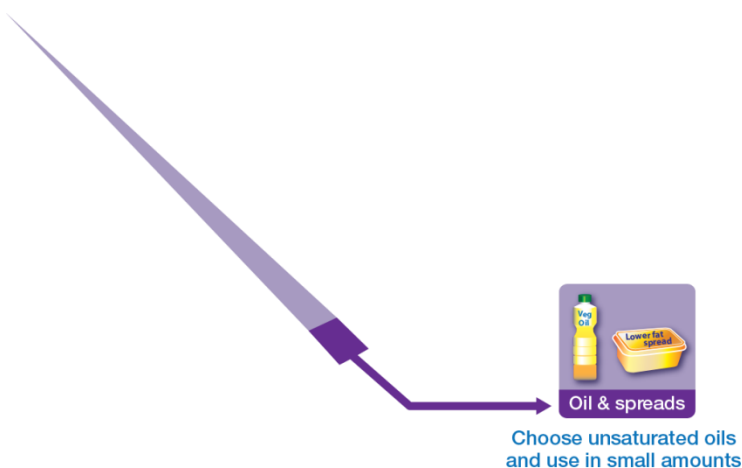
	<p>Switch to semi-skimmed, one per cent fat or skimmed milk.</p> <p>Milk drinks such as milkshakes and yogurt drinks can be high in sugar so choose varieties that are lower in sugar or make them yourself using fruit to sweeten.</p> <p>Choose a variety of cheeses to vary the fat content. Hard cheeses such as Cheddar tend to be higher in saturated fat than softer cheese such as Edam and Camembert.</p> <p>For general cooking, use lower fat varieties of hard cheese; the best option is to use a small amount of mature reduced fat cheese.</p> <p>Crème fraîche and soured creams are available in lower fat varieties and can be used with little difference to the taste of the recipe.</p>
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Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	
Minimum standards	<p>A meat or vegetarian protein source must be offered at all main meal service.</p> <p>Fish must be offered at least twice a week, one portion of which one should be oily.</p> <p>All vegetarian meals must contain a protein source. Vegetarian options must only be based on cheese in total not more than twice each week (where lunch only is served)</p>

	<p>and a maximum of four times each week (where both lunch and evening meal are served).</p> <p>Where red or processed meat is served a portion should not exceed 70g on average cooked weight.</p> <p>There must be at least two days each week without any processed meat or processed poultry products. Sandwich counters are exempt for this standard but are required to adhere to specifications in vending guidance.</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of meat and meat products must meet the UK wide salt targets for industry.https://www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland/nutritionni/salt-ni/salt_targets</p> <p>Meat and meat products (procured by volume) are lower in saturated fat where available</p>
<p>What foods are included</p>	<p>Meat, poultry, offal, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, pulses, seeds and other non-dairy sources of protein.</p> <p>Meat includes all cuts of beef, lamb and pork. Processed meat and chicken products include ham, bacon, salami, corned beef, beef burgers and sausages and chicken goujons/nuggets.</p> <p>Fish includes any fresh, frozen and tinned fish, such as tuna, sardines, pilchards, mackerel and fish products such as fish cakes and fish fingers.</p> <p>Oily fish includes salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel, herring, pilchards and fresh tuna. A portion of oily fish is 140g.</p> <p>Canned tuna is not considered an oily fish as the long chain omega-3 fatty acids are lost in the canning process for tuna. Other canned oily fish are not affected in the same way.</p> <p>All eggs e.g. boiled, poached, scrambled, fried, omelettes.</p> <p>Beans and pulses e.g. baked beans, chickpeas, butter beans, kidney beans and lentils are in this group and provide a good source of protein for people following a vegetarian or vegan diet.</p> <p>Other protein products suitable for people following a vegetarian or vegan diet include nuts, tofu and quinoa and textured protein products such as soya.</p>
<p>Tips on choosing</p>	<p>Choose leaner cuts of meat where possible.</p> <p>Turkey and chicken are lower fat options when the skin is removed.</p>

	<p>When selecting meat products choose those with higher meat content and also consider the fat and salt content. Look at the label for more information.</p> <p>Meat products in pastry, such as pies and sausage rolls, are often high in fat; choose the lower fat options where available.</p> <p>Choose tinned fish in spring water rather than oil or brine.</p> <p>Look for canned beans and pulses with no added salt and sugar.</p> <p>Source fish (including where it is an ingredient in a composite product) from sustainable sources meeting the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (includes Marine Stewardship Council certification and Marine Conservation Society “fish to eat” or equivalent). Avoid ‘red list’ or endangered species of farmed or wild fish (Marine Conservation Society ‘fish to avoid’).</p>
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Oils and Spreads	
Minimum standards	<p>All cooking oils must be based on mono- or poly-unsaturated fats.</p> <p>At least 75 per cent of spreads must be based on mono- or poly-unsaturated fats.</p> <p>Choose unsaturated cooking oils</p> <p>Choose salad dressings such as soya, rapeseed, corn, sunflower and olive oils.</p>
What foods are included	Foods containing saturated fat include:

	Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated oils, spreads (maize, corn, safflower, sunflower, soya, olive and rapeseed) and low fat spreads and oil-based salad dressings containing these oils.
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Other food and drink high in fat, salt and sugar	
Minimum standards	<p>All mayonnaise and salad creams (including those used in potato salads and coleslaws) must be either low fat, light or reduced calorie</p> <p>At least 75 per cent of pre-packed ready meals and prepared sandwiches (procured by volume) must contain less than 6g saturated fat per portion.</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of all main course options must not be deep fried, batter-coated, bread crumbed, in a creamy sauce or containing pastry. Where chips are served, they must be thick-cut and oven-baked and there must be an alternative starchy side option available that is not deep fried or coated in oil or butter. Do not add salt to chips before serving.</p> <p>There must be at least one day each week (Monday – Friday) when a high fat starchy food such as chips, wedges, garlic bread or roast potatoes are not served.</p> <p>When desserts are served, half of desserts available should contain at least 50% of their weight as fruit</p>

	<p>Lower fat alternatives to cream should be used in cooking e.g. low fat yogurt, very low fat crème fraiche and fromage frais or any product which is less than 10g of fat per 100g.</p> <p>Savoury snacks including crisps and nuts must only be available in the smallest commercially available packet size (ideally 30g or less). Unsalted versions must be available.</p> <p>At least 50 per cent of savoury snacks must be lower fat options.</p> <p>Baked products such as muffins and scones must be less than 60g per scone and 80g per muffin.</p> <p>No less than 80 per cent of beverages (procured by volume) must be sugar free, diet or with no added sugar.</p> <p>All sugar containing drinks must be available in the smallest single serve portion size and must not exceed 330ml.</p> <p>Confectionery, packet sweet / biscuit snacks must be available in the smallest standard single serve portion size within the market and should not exceed 250kcal.</p> <p>Traybakes and baked products e.g. muffins, scones, brownies, caramel squares must not exceed 250kcal per serving.</p> <p>Salt or salt substitutes should not be on display at tables.</p>
<p>What foods are included</p>	<p>Chocolate, crisps, biscuits, pastries, cakes, puddings, ice cream, rich sauces, and gravies, sugary soft drinks, , sweets, jams, honey and sugar, as well as foods such as cakes, puddings, biscuits, pastries and ice cream.</p> <p>Butter, ghee, lard, suet, cooking oils (e.g. palm oil and coconut oil), oil-based salad dressings containing these oils, mayonnaise, cream, crème fraiche.</p>

6 Calories on menus

Research shows that 75 per cent of people surveyed in Northern Ireland would like to see more information on healthy options when eating outside of the home.¹⁰

Displaying calories on menus can help customers to make more informed choices and enable them to improve their diets. Calorie labelling helps consumers to make informed choices when eating away from home and also helps caterers to provide lower calorie options.

Calories are a measure of the amount of energy in food. Knowing how many calories are in food can help consumers to balance the energy eaten with the energy used, which is the key to a healthy weight. As a guide the average man needs around 2,500 Calories a day to maintain a healthy body weight, and the average woman needs around 2,000 Calories a day.

When displaying calorie information it is recommended that these four principles of calorie labelling are followed:

- Calorie information is displayed clearly and prominently at the point of choice.
- Calorie information is provided for all standardised food and drink items sold or provided (a standardised food or drink is on sale for at least 30 days a year)
- Calorie information is provided per portion/item/meal
- Information on average calorie requirements (e.g. women need around 2000 calories per day) is displayed clearly and prominently to help consumers 'make sense' of calorie information.

¹⁰ Agency FS. Exploring Food Attitudes and Behaviours in the UK: Findings from the Food and You Survey 2010. 2010.

7 Future development

It is recognised that the development of nutritional standards is the first step in the process towards having these successfully implemented and that further resources and support will be required to achieve this. The development of a regionally agreed vending policy for use within Health and Social Care is also a further important aim for future work.

8 References

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