

Healthy Meals in Schools Programme (HMSP) FAQ

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Cooked Food or Snack Stalls

1.1 Wholegrains

Serve 2 serves of wholegrains or more:

Examples of 1 serve:

- 100g of cooked mixed rice (20% wholegrain + 80% white)
- 100g of cooked wholegrain oriental noodle
- 100g of cooked wholegrain bee hoon
- 2 slices of wholegrain bread (60g)

And meet the following product criteria and preparation method:

- Products carrying the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS), or meet the “% of Wholegrains” and Sugar criteria of the HCS guidelines (Cereal category)
- For homemade snack, sugar level must be 12g or less per serving¹.
- Fully cooked
- No deep frying

1.1.1 Are brown rice, wholegrain noodles or wholemeal bread the only type of staple that can be served?

‘Brown rice & Wholemeal bread’ is the name of the food group in My Healthy Plate. Food from this food group can also include other local staples e.g., noodles, wraps, etc. Please ensure that the criterion to serve wholegrains as shown in Point 1 of HMSP Guideline is also met.

1.1.2 What are the types of wholegrains that can be served?

The following table is a non-exhaustive list of wholegrains that can be served in schools. If you are unsure, let the canteen committee know of your request so that they can advise you.

Brown rice/porridge	Chapatti	Quinoa
Mixed brown rice/porridge	Oats	Millet
Wholemeal noodles & pasta	Wholemeal biscuit	Unrefined barley (Not pearl barley)
Brown rice beehoon	Soba (made with buckwheat)	Buckwheat
Red cargo rice	Black glutinous rice	Purple rice

1.1.3 Can instant noodles without the HCS be allowed to be sold in school?

Yes, but these non-HCS instant noodles should meet the requirement below as an equivalent to HCS instant noodles. These instant noodles must not be deep-fried.

Fat	Trans fat	Sodium	Wholegrains
≤8g/100g	≤0.1g/100g	≤400mg/100g	≥15%

¹ Per serving refers to a typical serving portion of the homemade snack/dessert.

1.1.4 Where to purchase wholegrain oriental noodles?

You may refer to the supplier list on the HMSP webpage². Alternatively, you can also purchase wholegrain oriental noodles (e.g., wholegrain kway teow, la mian, hokkien noodles, mee tai bak, mee kia, mee pok, bee hoon) from supermarkets such as Giant, Fairprice, and Sheng Siong.

1.1.5 Wholegrain oriental noodles are much more expensive than non-wholegrain ones.

Majority of the wholegrain oriental noodles commonly found in the supermarket are similarly priced, although some types have a higher base price of between 1 to 2 times the price of non-wholegrain version (e.g., la mian). Below is a general comparison for reference:

Type of Noodle	Cost of Wholegrain Version/kg	Cost of Non-Wholegrain Version/kg	Price Difference
Hokkien Noodle	\$5-\$6	\$5-\$6	No Difference
Kway Teow	\$5-\$8	\$5-\$8	No Difference
La Mian	\$4-\$5	\$2-4	1.5x
Vermicelli	\$3-\$7	\$2-\$7	1.5x

1.1.6 Is white french loaf (baguette) allowed to be sold? The wholemeal variant is difficult and expensive to obtain in the market.

Yes, it is allowed as the wholemeal variant is not easily available in the market.

1.1.7 Are egg noodles allowed to be served?

Most commercially available dried egg noodles have been pre-deep-fried. For example, ee-fu noodles do not comply with HMSP guidelines. Therefore, schools are encouraged to use fresh noodles. Please ensure only the wholegrain version of oriental noodles is served.

1.1.8 A snack stall is selling a set of three pieces of half-sliced wholemeal bread (not full sized meal) with a little egg filling and lettuce. Can it be exempted from the requirement of including four food groups?

Yes. It can be exempted from including 4 food groups, considering that 1 ½ slices of wholemeal bread is barely 1 serving and this item is served in the snack stall where most of the items (e.g., pau, siew mai, kueh, cake) are not considered as main meals. However, we would encourage the inclusion of all 4 food groups in the food to improve the nutritional value of the food sold.

² https://hpb.gov.sg/docs/default-source/pdf/hmpp-hmsp-suppliers'-list_august-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=9182357_4

1.2 Fruit

*At least half a serving (optional if fruit is served at any time during the school day e.g., during assembly, snack break, etc.)

1.2.1 Are tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and bell peppers considered as fruit or vegetables?

Botanically, anything with seed is a fruit. However, in Singapore's context, these are considered and eaten as vegetables.

1.2.2 Can fruit be replaced with vegetables in meals?

Both fruit and vegetables should be consumed daily without one replacing the other as they are two different groups that offer unique combination of nutrients and phytochemicals. For instance, vegetables in general are higher in iron, folate, and vitamin K while fruit are generally higher in vitamin C, especially considering fruit are usually eaten raw and this could retain the heat-sensitive vitamin C. By consuming both fruit and vegetables, children could get the wide range of important nutrients and phytochemicals contained in them.

1.2.3 What is ½ serving of fruit?

Examples of ½ serving of fruit is half a small apple, orange, pear or mango (65g), ½ wedges of papaya, pineapple, or watermelon (65g), 5 grapes or longans, 1 small banana, 1/8 cup of dried fruit (20g) etc.
<https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/56/fruits-and-veggies>



1.3 Vegetables

*At least two heaped dessertspoons

1.3.1 What is two heaped dessert spoons of vegetables?

Two heaped dessertspoons of vegetables is approximately 50g (1/2 serving)-

1.3.2 Are achar and kimchi allowed for sale?

No, these contain added salt during the preservation process and therefore not allowed.

1.3.3 Is dried seaweed allowed to be served?

Dried seaweed can be served if it is endorsed with HCS or meet the HCS nutrient guideline of ≤ 120 mg sodium/100g with no added fat and sugar (refer to HCS nutrient guidelines document, Dried Vegetable sub-category)

1.3.4 Is it acceptable to use preserved vegetables which have been pre-soaked for a day (to get rid of excess sodium), in soups?

No, it is not allowed. This is to encourage the use of natural ingredients, for example, mushrooms, tomatoes, celery, garlic, onions, herbs and spices, for flavouring instead of salt or salt-preserved food ingredients.

1.4 Protein (Meat and Others)

1.4.1 Can mock meat be served for vegetarian dishes?

Mock meat with HCS can be served using healthier preparation, however, deep-fried food, or preserved food shall not be sold.

1.4.2 Is skinless chicken thigh allowed to be served?

Yes, skinless chicken thigh is allowed.

1.4.3 Is cheese tofu allowed to be served?

Cheese tofu with HCS is allowed to be served.

1.4.4 Is mock crab stick allowed to be served?

Yes, crab stick is allowed for sale in schools. Choose the crab stick with HCS equivalent. You may refer to the supplier list .

1.4.5 Are fish cakes allowed to be served?

Fish cakes are usually pre-deep-fried items and will not be allowed for sale in schools. However, if canteen vendors are able to look for the non pre-deep-fried (e.g. steamed) variety of fish cakes, those will be allowed.

[Commercial] Pre deep-fried Fish Cake



[Commercial] Non deep-fried Steamed Fish Cake



1.4.6 Are commercial fish fingers with the healthier choice symbol allowed to be served?

All food items which have been pre deep fried, without the HCS logo will not be allowed for sale in school canteen/cafes.

1.4.7 Are sausages, ham and luncheon meat allowed to be served?

Only sausages, ham and luncheon meat that have no nitrite with <450mg/100g sodium and <10g/100g total fat comply with HMSP guidelines. HPB will require a lab report of these no-nitrite sausages, ham or luncheon meat from the suppliers prior to sale in schools. Once every two years, an audit laboratory check of these food products will be conducted to ensure the nitrite content is as per committed and fulfil the HCS criteria.

1.4.8 Are taupok and taukee allowed to be served?

Taupok is usually pre-deep-fried and therefore it is not allowed.

As taukee is beancurd strips that are usually not pre-deep-fried, it is allowed in food preparation, but

should not be a replacement of protein items such as meat/fish/egg.

1.4.9 Is ikan bilis allowed to be served?

Fried ikan bilis is not allowed. However, ikan bilis cooked using methods such as toasting, baking, pan-frying or air-frying is allowed.

The ikan bilis also should be washed or soaked before cooking to remove some sodium. One serving of ikan bilis should be limited to no more than 2 tsp (10g) to manage sodium content.

1.4.10 Is coconut milk allowed to be served?

Only reduced-fat alternatives (e.g., Trim coconut milk, Lite coconut milk, Super lite coconut milk) which contains 15g or less total fat per 100ml can be used.

1.5 Fats and Oils

Only fats and oils (e.g., cooking oil, margarine) endorsed with the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) or meet the HCS guidelines are allowed to be used in food preparation.

1.5.1 Are par-fry commercial products allowed to be served?

Par-frying is a process that involves food being fully submerged in oil, as with the deep-frying process, but at a shorter cooking time. Food that are par-fried will also be considered as pre-deep-fried and will not be allowed for sale in schools.

Note: Deep-fried food and preserved food (e.g., sausages, ham, luncheon meat³, preserved vegetables or preserved eggs) shall not be sold.

1.5.2 Is mayonnaise allowed to be served?

Only mayonnaise carrying the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) or meet the HCS guidelines ($\leq 5\text{g}/100\text{g}$ total fat, $\leq 500\text{mg}/100\text{g}$ sodium and $\leq 15\text{g}/100\text{g}$ sugar) is allowed.

1.5.3 Is margarine allowed to be served?

Only margarines carrying the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) or meet the HCS guidelines (Fats and Oils category) is allowed.

³ Sausages, ham and luncheon meat that meet the following nutrition criteria are allowed to be sold in schools: $<450\text{mg}/100\text{g}$ sodium, $<10\text{g}/100\text{g}$ total fat and no nitrite.

1.6 Sauces, Spreads, Condiments and Salt

1.6.1 Can gravy be served with rice dishes?

For rice dishes, gravy or sauce shall not be served unless requested. If requested, serve 2 dessertspoons or less of gravy or sauce from cooked dish only.

1.6.2 Is it acceptable to give more than the recommended two dessertspoons of gravy to the students upon request?

Except for noodle and pasta dishes which includes gravy as part of the dish (e.g., Mee rebus, Spaghetti Bolognese, Hor Fun and etc) there should be no more than two dessertspoons of gravy/sauce being served per meal portion.

1.6.3 Why only sauces, spreads and condiments with the Healthier Choice Symbol can be used?

Sauces, spreads and condiments endorsed with Healthier Choice Symbol are lower in sodium and sugar. When it is used for food preparation, we can prepare healthier meals for our consumption which in-turn reduces our risk of developing chronic diseases.

1.6.4 Why regular salt cannot be used?

Table salt with healthier choice symbol contains lower amount of sodium as compared to regular table salt. High sodium intake is associated with increased risk of hypertension, which is in turn associated with higher risks of cardiovascular complications such as stroke and heart attack.

1.6.5 Can sea salt be used?

Sea salt can be used if it is endorsed with Healthier Choice Symbol or is equivalent in nutrient requirement for Table Salt as listed in the Healthier Choice Symbol Nutrient Guidelines.

Beverage Stalls

1.7 Sugar-based drinks (E.g. Non-carbonated drinks/ Asian drink)

1.7.1 How do I calculate the amount of sugar in my drink?

You can calculate the amount of sugar added (rule of thumb, 1 teaspoon of sugar/honey/syrup/rock sugar is 5g) and divide it by the total amount of ingredients in the drink/dessert, followed by multiplying the answer by 100%. Your final answer should be ≤5g sugar/100ml. Otherwise, you have to further reduce the amount of sugar added so that the end product will contain only ≤5g sugar/100ml.

E.g.: 2 teaspoons (10g) of sugar are added when making 500ml barley water.

Hence, the calculation of the amount of sugar in the drink is shown as below.

$$10 / 500 \times 100\% = 2\text{g sugar} / 100 \text{ ml}$$

1.7.2 Are grass jelly drinks allowed?

Yes, the home-made drink can contain the jelly as long as the jelly is not pre-soaked in syrup and meet the sugar guidelines. Alternatively, commercial packaged drink contains jelly and with the Healthier Choice Symbol is allowed.

1.7.3 Are drinks with sugar alcohol (e.g., sorbitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt, lactitol, mannitol and erythritol) allowed?

The aim is to cultivate a palate for less sweet drinks among the youths. We recognise that sweeteners may condition our palates to demand for sweet food and drinks in our diet, which may lead to excess calorie and sugar intake. Therefore, drinks containing non-sugar sweeteners are disallowed in schools.

1.7.4 How do I know if a drink contains sweetener or sugar alcohol?

Sweeteners and/or sugar alcohols are listed in the ingredient list.

These are some common sweeteners and sugar alcohols used in beverages: acesulfame K, sucralose, aspartame, cyclamates, saccharin, sorbitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt, lactitol, mannitol and erythritol.

For more information, please visit <https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/77/sweet-talk-sugars-and-sweeteners> .

1.7.5 How much sugar I can add into homemade drinks?

For homemade drinks (e.g., barley, coffee, tea etc), the sugar content shall be equal to or less than 5g/100ml.

1.7.6 How much sugar I can add into homemade drinks?

For homemade desserts (e.g., green bean soup and soya bean pudding), the sugar content shall be equal to or less than 12g per serving. Weight for 1 serving is 200g or less.

1.8 Juice

1.8.1 Will the revised HCS SSB guideline impact pre-packaged fruit juices?

Only pre-packaged fruit juices carrying the HCS or equivalent (not containing sugar alcohol, artificial or intense sweeteners) will be allowed for sale in schools.

1.9 Dairy/creamer-based drinks

E.g. Malted or chocolate drink, coffee, tea, milk, yoghurt drink etc.

1.9.1 Will the revised HCS SSB guideline impact freshly prepared drinks?

Example: malted drinks such as Milo, Horlicks, cordial drinks, and freshly prepared hot drinks.

The HMSP Guidelines are also aligned with upcoming Singapore Government's healthier food and drinks policy. Schools selling freshly prepared beverages must ensure the freshly prepared beverages are lower in sugar and saturated fat content. The sugar level and/or saturated fat level for freshly prepared beverages is capped at 5g/100ml and 1.2g/100ml, respectively.

1.10 Freshly squeezed fruit juice

1.10.1 Is freshly squeezed fruit juices allowed to be sold?

From end 2023, per 100ml of juice must contain 5g or less sugar that is naturally present in fruits.

On average, freshly squeezed fruit juice contains 8g of sugar per 100ml. To help manage the amount of sugar present, all freshly squeezed fruit juice must be prepared by mixing 1 part of water or ice to 2 parts of freshly squeezed fruit juice.

Example:

50ml of water + 100ml of freshly squeezed fruit juice

Dessert Stalls

Stalls selling snacks shall only sell homemade snacks (e.g., green bean soup and soya bean pudding) with a sugar content equal to or less than one tablespoon (12g) per serving⁴; or commercially prepared products with the HCS or HCS-equivalent⁵.

1.11 Jellies

1.11.1 Is HCS Jello product allowed to be sold as a drink or snack?

Under the HCS list, this product is considered to be “miscellaneous/snack” instead of “beverage”.

1.12 Local and seasonal cakes

1.12.1 Do steamed yam cake, lor mai kai, fan choy, glutinous rice and garlic bread need to be served according to the 4 food groups?

These items are not required to be served according to the 4 food groups as the serving sizes of these food items are usually in small portions (not the size of the main meals) and they are usually consumed as a snack.

1.12.2 Are small amounts of Oreo, Nutella and Mcvities biscuits allowed to be used in homemade desserts such as Oreo cupcakes?

Yes, they are allowed so long as the sugar content per serving is 12g of sugar.

1.12.3 Sale of drinks and desserts with less sugar.

Only commercially prepared sweetened drinks and commercially packed drinks such as canned and bottled beverages that meet the sugar levels shown in the table below are allowed for sale in schools. (Please refer to the Health Promotion Board’s HMSP webpage⁶ for the list of drinks allowed for sale in schools.)

⁴ Per serving refers to a typical serving portion of the homemade snack.

⁵ HPB shall verify if snacks without the HCS are HCS-equivalent by checking the product nutrition information panel of product specifications from suppliers.

⁶ <https://www.hpb.gov.sg/schools/school-programmes/healthy-meals-in-schools-programme>

Common Categories of Drinks Sold in Schools	Sugar level (per 100ml)
	Current
<i>Sweetened beverages</i>	
Non-carbonated drinks/ Asian drink	≤5g
Isotonic drinks	≤5g
Juice drinks (at least 10% fruit juice)	≤5g
Carbonated drinks	≤5g
Juice drinks	≤5g
Fruit, fruit and veg juices	≤5g
<i>Dairy/ creamer-based drinks</i>	
Malted or chocolate drink	≤5g
Cultured milk drink/ yogurt drink	≤5g

- a) Drinks, including commercially packed drinks and freshly brewed/squeezed beverages such as homemade barley and fruit juice, can only be sweetened with sugar. Non-sugar substitutes such as sugar alcohol (e.g., sorbitol and xylitol) and intense sweeteners (e.g., acesulfame K, sucralose and aspartame) are not allowed⁷.
- b) At least 10% of all the commercially prepared drinks and commercially packed drinks sold in the school shall be calorie-free (e.g., bottled water).
- c) Solid ingredients (e.g., canned fruit in syrup, “pearl”/“bubble”, chin chow and sago) that are sweetened shall not be used.
- d) No sweeteners (e.g., syrup, sugar and honey) shall be added to homemade fruit juices or freshly brewed/squeezed drinks. On average, freshly squeezed fruit juices contain 8g of sugar/100g. Therefore, stall owners must dilute their fruit juices with water. Stall owners could add 1/3 cup of water or ice to 2/3 cup freshly squeezed fruit juice. Please see **Annex** for visual examples.

⁷ The aim is to cultivate a palate for less sweet drinks among the youths. We recognise that sweeteners may condition our palates to demand sweet food and drinks in our diet, which may lead to excessive calorie and sugar intake. Therefore, drinks containing non-sugar sweeteners are disallowed in schools.

Others

1.13 Provision of Balanced Meal

1.13.1 Food in the four food groups shall be made available in every main meal⁸

- (1) Brown rice, wholegrain noodles or wholemeal bread: 2 serves or more brown rice or wholegrain noodles or wholemeal bread.
- (2) Vegetables: At least 2 heaped dessertspoons
- (3) Protein (Meat and Others)⁹: 2 serves or more meat and other foods like tofu, legumes, mock meat.
- (4) Fruit: ½ serve or more (optional if fruit is served at any time during the school day e.g., during assembly, snack break, etc.). Self-service of fruit is acceptable.

1.13.2 What are the types of food that have to be served as a balanced main meal, i.e., in the four food groups?

The following table includes a non-exhaustive list of foods that are and are not required to be served as a balanced meal. For example, two pieces of roti prata have to be served as part of the four food groups while siew mai does not.

Examples of food that are required to include four food groups when served
1. Plain roti prata ¹⁰ , 2 regular pieces (120g)
2. Roti john, 1 regular sandwich (250g)
3. Roti jala, 4 pieces (320g)
4. Chapatti, 2 pieces (90g)
5. Tortilla/Pita wrap with filling, 1 piece (200g)
6. Macaroni cheese, 1 bowl (210g)
7. Egg Banjo, 1 piece (180g)
8. Baguette/Sandwich with savoury filling; 2 slices of bread (110g)
9. Sushi, Gimbap; 8 pieces (280g)
10. Pizza, 2 slices (120g)
11. Chicken burger, 1 piece (130g)
These examples are listed based on the assumption that the serving size of these items is similar to those of main meals (e.g., rice, noodles) served in schools. It is required to comply with the balanced meals criteria ¹¹ . If the serving size of these items is smaller than those of main meals, it is not required to comply with balance meals criteria ⁸ .
Examples of food that are <u>not required</u> to include 4 food groups when served
1. Different types of pau
2. Siew mai

⁸ Examples of main meals are economic rice, fried rice, noodle soup, stir-fried oriental noodles or pasta, sauce-based noodle (e.g., mee rebus, pasta with sauce), chicken chop, etc. .

⁹ Includes Dairy, Egg, Plant-based protein, and Soy products.

¹⁰ Homemade roti prata shall be prepared according to the Healthy Meals in Schools Programme criteria (The roti prata should carry the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) or meet the HCS guidelines (Fats and Oils category)) (e.g., ghee and butter are not used).

¹¹ Balance food means Include food in the 4 food groups, serve at least 2 heaped dessertspoons of vegetables and at least ½ serving of fruit

3. Soon kueh
4. Chee cheong fun
5. Popiah (non deep fried)
6. Putu mayam
7. Muah chee
8. Tau huay
9. Tau suan
10. Red/green bean soup
11. Cookie
12. Peanut butter/jam sandwich
13. Waffle/pancake (plain/peanut/jam/chocolate chips/banana)
14. Bun (with or without filling)
15. Cake/muffin
16. Nachos with cheese
17. Breakfast cereals with or without milk
18. Lor mai kai/fan choi
These examples of food are listed based on the assumption that these foods are commonly consumed as snacks.

1.14 Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS)

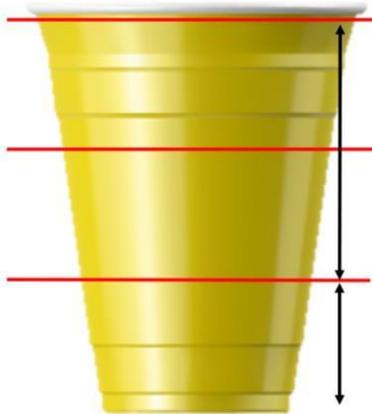
1.14.1 Will there be changes to the guidelines in the near future?

HCS guidelines are reviewed regularly and adjusted from time to time. Schools will be given sufficient time to implement the changes should there be any further changes in the guidelines.

ANNEX:

Depending on your method of preparation, below methods are acceptable.

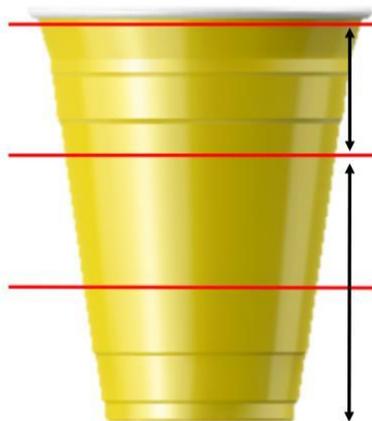
Method 1



2) Then fill to the top of the cup with freshly squeezed fruit juice

1) Fill 1/3 cup of water or ice

Method 2



2) Fill rest of the cup with water or ice

1) Fill 2/3 of cup with freshly squeezed fruit juice