

**HEALTHY MEALS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME (HMSP)
GUIDELINES – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)**

Criterion 1

Food in the four food groups shall be made available in every main meal¹:

- (1) Brown rice, wholegrain noodles or wholemeal bread
- (2) Vegetables: At least two heaped dessertspoons
- (3) Meat and alternative protein food²
- (4) 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.)

Self-service of fruit is acceptable.

Four food groups

- ***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 ³ , 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)
<p>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 criterion 1 (include food in the 4 food groups, serve at least 2 heaped dessert spoons of vegetables and at least ½ serving of fruit). If the serving size of these items is smaller than those of main meals, it is not required to comply with criterion 1.</p>

¹ Examples of main meals are economic rice, fried rice, noodle soup and fried noodles.

² Examples of food in the 'meat and alternative protein' food group are chicken, fish, lentils, beans and tofu.

³ Homemade roti prata shall be prepared according to the Healthy Meals in Schools Programme criteria (e.g. ghee and butter are not used).

Examples of food that are <u>not required</u> to include 4 food groups when served
1. Different types of pau
2. Siew mai
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 food are commonly consumed as snacks.

- i. First Food Group: Brown rice, wholegrain noodles or wholemeal bread
 - **Are brown rice, wholegrain noodles or wholemeal bread the only type of staple that can be served?**
 'Brown rice, wholegrain noodles or 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, pumpkin, potato etc. Please ensure that Criterion 2 (wholegrains) is also met.
- ii. Second and Fourth Food Group: Fruit & vegetables
 - **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.
 - **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.
 - **What is two heaped dessert spoons of vegetables?**
 Two heaped dessertspoons of vegetables is approximately 50 - 75g (about ½ - ¾ serving), or 1.5 tablespoons depending on the type of vegetables.
 - **What is ½ serving of fruit?**
 Examples of ½ serving of fruit is ½ apple (65g), 1 small banana and 5 grapes.

iii. Third Food Group: Meat and alternative protein food

- **Can mock meat be served for vegetarian dishes?**
Non pre-deep-fried mock meat can be served (refer to Criterion 4).

Criterion 2

Serve wholegrains:

- Rice/porridge: Use at least 20% of unpolished rice, e.g. brown rice mixed with other types of rice.
- Noodles⁴: Serve only wholegrain oriental noodles⁵/instant noodles.
- Bread: Use only wholemeal/wholegrain bread to prepare sandwiches.

- **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 check with HPB.

Brown rice/porridge	Chapatti	Quinoa
Mixed brown rice/porridge	Oats	Millet
Wholemeal noodles & pasta	Wholemeal biscuit	Unrefined barley
Brown rice beehoon	Soba (made with buckwheat)	Buckwheat
Red cargo rice	Black glutinous rice	Purple rice

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

Yes, but these non-HCS instant noodles 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%

- **Where can I buy wholegrain oriental noodles?**

You may refer to the supplier list on HMSP webpage⁶. 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, NTUC, and Sheng Siong.

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

Majority of the wholegrain oriental noodles that are commonly find in the supermarket only cost between 1 to 2 times the price of non-wholegrain version. 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	1x
Kway Teow	\$5-\$8	\$5-\$8	1x
La Mian	\$4-\$5	\$2-4	1.5x
Vermicelli	\$3-\$7	\$2-\$7	1.5x

⁴ With effect from January 2020. For spaghetti, minimum 20% of the wholegrain variant must be included.

⁵ Examples of oriental noodles include yellow noodles, kuey teow, and bee hoon.

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

- ***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.

Criterion 3

Use skinless poultry and lean meat when preparing food.

- ***Is skinless chicken thigh allowed to be served?***

Yes, chicken thigh is allowed.

Criterion 4

Deep-fried food, pre deep-fried food (e.g. pre deep-fried chicken nuggets or pre deep-fried French fries) and preserved food (e.g. sausages, ham, luncheon meat⁷, preserved vegetables or preserved eggs) shall not be sold.

- ***Are commercial products which undergo the par-fry process, 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.
- ***Are achar and kimchi allowed for sale?***
No, these contain added salt during the preservation process and therefore not allowed.
- ***Is cheese tofu allowed to be served?***
No, it is not allowed as cheese tofu is usually pre deep-fried.
- ***Is crab stick allowed to be served?***
Yes, crab stick is allowed for sale in schools.
- ***Are egg noodles allowed to be served?***
Most commercially available dried egg noodles have been pre deep-fried. For example, ee-fu noodles are not allowed. Therefore, schools are encouraged to use fresh noodles. Please ensure that Criterion 2 (wholegrains) is also met.
- ***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.

⁷ Sausages, ham and luncheon meat that meet the following nutrition criteria are allowed to be sold in schools: <450mg/100g sodium, <10g/100g total fat and no nitrite.

[Commercial] Pre deep-fried Fish Cake



[Commercial] Non deep-fried Steamed Fish Cake



- ***Are commercial fish fingers with the healthier choice symbol allowed to be served?***
All food items which have been pre deep fried, with or without the HCS logo will not be allowed for sale in school canteen/cafes.
- ***Is mock meat allowed to be served?***
Assessors will have to observe if the mock meat is pre deep-fried visually and check the nutrition information panel on the packaging. If the meat is not pre deep-fried, and the total fat is <10g/100g and the sodium is <600mg/100g, then it is allowed.
- ***Are sausages, ham and luncheon meat allowed to be served?***
Only sausages, ham and luncheon meat that have no (zero) nitrite with <450mg/100g sodium and <10g/100g total fat can be sold in schools. 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.
- ***Is seaweed allowed to be served?***
Most seaweed sold commercial are with added salt/sugar and are not allowed. Dried seaweed without added salt is allowed.
- ***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.
- ***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.
- ***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.

One serving of ikan bilis should be limited to no more than 2 tsp (10g) to manage sodium content.

Criterion 5

When high-fat ingredients (e.g. coconut milk/cream, cheese, mayonnaise and cream) are used, half or more of the required amounts of such ingredients shall be replaced with reduced-fat alternatives (e.g. reduced-fat evaporated milk, reduced-fat cheese, reduced-fat mayonnaise and reduced-fat cream).

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

- ***Is coconut milk allowed to be served?***

Yes, coconut milk is allowed to be used with at least 50% of coconut milk replaced with reduced-fat coconut milk, full cream milk or equivalent.

- ***Is mayonnaise allowed to be served?***

Yes, mayonnaise is allowed to be used with at least 50% to be replaced by a lower/reduced fat counterpart. HCS mayonnaise is recommended as it is significantly lower in fat as compared to average commercial mayonnaise. Alternative to using HCS mayonnaise can be commercial mayonnaise labelled as lower/reduced fat (at least 25% less fat than the original mayonnaise of the same brand). If mayonnaise is homemade, it has to meet the HCS criteria for salad dressings/mayonnaise which is $\leq 5\text{g}/100\text{g}$ total fat, $\leq 500\text{mg}/100\text{g}$ sodium and $\leq 15\text{g}/100\text{g}$ sugar.

- ***Is margarine allowed to be served?***

Only margarines carrying the HCS or equivalent will be allowed in schools.

Criterion 6

For rice dishes, gravy, sauce or soup shall not be served unless requested. If requested, do not serve more than two dessertspoons or one tablespoon of gravy/sauce/soup.

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

Except for noodle and pasta dishes, there should be no more than two dessertspoons of gravy/sauce being served per meal portion.

Criterion 7

Stalls selling snacks shall only sell homemade snacks (e.g. salad and sandwiches) with a sugar content equal to or less than one tablespoon (15g) per serving⁸, or commercially prepared products with the HCS or HCS-equivalent⁹.

- ***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".

⁸ Per serving refers to a typical serving portion of the homemade snack.

⁹ HPB shall verify if snacks without the HCS are HCS-equivalent by checking the product nutrition information panel of product specifications from suppliers.

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

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.

- **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 Criterion 1 – the four food groups?**

Yes. It can be exempted from Criterion 1, considering that 1 ½ slices of wholemeal bread are 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.

- **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 <1 tablespoon (15g) of sugar.

Criterion 8

Sale of drinks and desserts with less sugar.

- a) 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 webpage¹⁰ for the list of drinks allowed for sale in schools.)

Common Categories of Drinks Sold in Schools	Sugar level (per 100ml)	
	Current	With effect from 1 May 2021*
Sweetened beverages		
Non-carbonated drinks/ Asian drink	≤6g	≤5g
Isotonic drinks	≤6g	≤5g
Juice drinks (at least 10% fruit juice)	≤6g	≤5g
Carbonated drinks	≤7g	≤5g
Juice drinks	≤6g	≤5g
Fruit, fruit and veg juices	≤12.5g	≤5g
Dairy/ creamer-based drinks		
Malted or chocolate drink	≤6g	≤5g
Cultured milk drink/ yogurt drink	≤7g	≤5g

*In support of nation-wide efforts to reduce sugar intake from sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB), beverage manufacturers will reformulate their products in accordance to the measures in the table above. Schools should deplete their current stock by 30 April 2021. More information can be found on the HMSP webpage.

- b) 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

¹⁰ <https://www.hpb.gov.sg/schools/school-programmes/healthy-meals-in-schools-programme>

such as sugar alcohol (e.g. sorbitol and xylitol) and intense sweeteners (e.g. acesulfame K, sucralose and aspartame) are not allowed¹¹.

- c) 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).
- d) For homemade drinks and desserts (e.g. barley, coffee, tea, green bean soup and soya bean pudding),
 - the sugar content shall be equal to or less than 6g/100ml (5g/100ml with effect from 1 May 2021).
 - solid ingredients (e.g. canned fruit in syrup, “pearl”/“bubble”, chin chow and sago) that are sweetened shall not be used.
- e) 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.

- ***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.
- ***I am selling grass jelly drink (chin chow), can the drink contain the jelly?***
Yes, the drink can contain the jelly as long as the jelly is not pre-soaked in syrup.
- ***Are drinks with sugar alcohol (e.g. sorbitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt, lactitol, mannitol and erythritol) allowed?***
Drinks with sugar alcohol are not allowed.
- ***How do I know if a drink contain sweetener or sugar alcohol?***
Sweeteners and/or sugar alcohols are listed in the ingredient list.
These are some common sweeteners and alcohols used in beverages: acesulfame K, sucralose, aspartame, cyclamates, saccharin, sorbitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt, lactitol, mannitol and erythritol.

Revised Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSB) Guideline (with effect from 1 May 2021)

- ***What are the changes to the revised Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) SSB guideline?***
Please refer to the latest HCS guidelines and official announcement “Re: Revision to the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) Guidelines – April 2020” at <https://www.hpb.gov.sg/food-beverage/healthier-choice-symbol> for the full list of the revisions.
- ***When will the revised HCS SSB guideline take effect in schools?***
Aligning with the beverage industry, all drinks sold in schools must fully comply with the revised HCS SSB guideline by 1 May 2021. A transition period of one year from the date of announcement has been provided.

¹¹ 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.

- **How will the revised HCS SSB guideline affect my operations?**

There will be **no change** in the way you procure or sell your beverages. Only drinks carrying HCS or equivalent (not containing sugar alcohol and intense sweeteners) are allowed for sale in schools.

Beverage manufacturers will make the necessary reformulation. Reformulated products will be updated in the school beverage list on the HMSP webpage.

- **I still have existing stock to deplete. Will I be penalised if I am selling existing stock?**

Schools have one year till 30 April 2021 to deplete existing stock.

- **What if none of the manufacturers reformulate their beverages and I have nothing to sell in school?**

The beverage industry has been consulted on the revision to the HCS SSB guideline. Beverage manufacturers have one year till 30 April 2021 to reformulate and release their products to the market.

- **Will the revised guideline impact pre-packaged fruit juices?**

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

- **Will the revised guideline impact freshly prepared drinks e.g. malted drinks such as Milo, Horlicks, cordial drinks, and freshly prepared hot drinks?**

Freshly prepared drinks in schools must follow the revised SSB guidelines of 5g of sugar per 100ml with effect from 1 May 2021. Beverage manufacturers will reformulate their products and canteen vendors shall continue to follow the preparation method on the packaging.

For freshly prepared hot drinks such as tea and coffee, one cup (250ml) of tea or coffee shall not contain more than 2 teaspoons of sugar or 1 tablespoon of low-fat condensed milk.

- **My stall sells freshly squeezed fruit juices. Am I still allowed to sell them?**

With the revised SSB guidelines, freshly squeezed fruit juices must also meet the 5g of sugar per 100ml cut-off. 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.

- **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.

Criterion 9

To encourage students to opt for water as their preferred choice of drink, each school must have at least two working water coolers¹² within the canteen area.

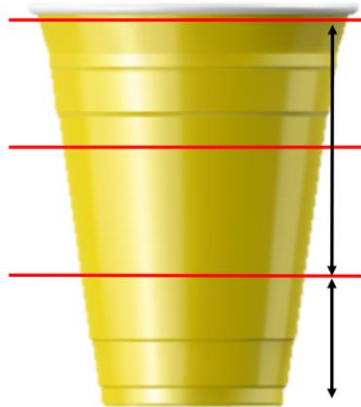
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¹² Schools shall ensure that water coolers are regularly maintained to ensure that water flow rate and temperature are conducive for drinking, and that proper hygiene around water coolers is maintained.

ANNEX:

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

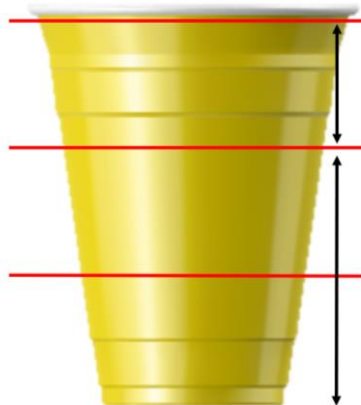
Method 1



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