

Defining Healthy Foods

MANY ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES have developed criteria to describe food items or food consumption patterns as “healthy” or “healthful.” These are often used in comparing food items for specific nutrient components to either select or avoid. There is no single definition of healthy foods. Most programs develop guidelines to encourage the consumption of less fat, saturated fat, dietary cholesterol and sodium. Some programs, like 5 A Day, are designed to promote fruits and vegetables as low-fat foods.

The core criteria from some organizations/programs are listed below. Consult references for full details.

- Less than 10% calories from saturated fat or one gram saturated fat/100 gram serving.
- No more than 100 mg cholesterol
- No more than 480 mg sodium

NORTH CAROLINA WINNER'S CIRCLE HEALTHY DINING PROGRAM

NATIONAL HEART, LUNG AND BLOOD INSTITUTE

Any recipe used in its publication must have (per serving)

- Less than 12 grams fat
- No more than four grams saturated fat
- Less than 100 mg dietary cholesterol
- Less than 600 mg sodium

See “Stay Young At Heart Program”

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE AND PRODUCE FOR BETTER HEALTH—5 A DAY PROGRAM

All juice products must be 100% juice or juice concentrate, may not have added fat or sugar and no more than 480 mg sodium per eight-ounce portion.

Any recipe promoted must

- Contribute at least one serving of a fruit and/or vegetable per portion of a recipe.
- Have less than 30% calories from fat or three gram total fat/100 gram serving.

For a Meal: Minimum of two servings of fruits/vegetables AND minimum of one serving of grains or beans OR minimum of 245 mg calcium. And meal must have: Maximum 30% of calories from fat AND maximum 1500 mg of sodium per meal.

For single item or side dish: Minimum of one serving of grains or beans OR minimum of one serving of fruits/vegetables OR minimum of 245 mg of calcium. And each item must have: Maximum 30% of calories from fat AND maximum 1000 mg sodium.

For a Snack: Maximum of 30% of calories from fat AND maximum 480 mg sodium AND maximum 35% sugar by weight.

Qualifying Beverages: Water and flavored waters with less than 50 calories per 8 oz serving OR skim or 1% milk OR at least 50% juice and 12 oz serving with no added sweeteners.

See www.ncwinnerscircle.com

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AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION FOOD CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Based on the standard serving sizes established by the U.S. government, a product may

- Include up to three grams total fat, up to one gram saturated fat and up to 20 mg cholesterol
- Must not exceed a sodium disqualifying level of 480 mg
- Must include at least 10% of the Daily Value for at least one of the six nutrients: protein, dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron
- Seafood, game meats, and meat and poultry products must contain less than five grams total fat, less than two grams saturated fat and less than 95 mg cholesterol per standard serving and per 100 grams

See <http://www.aha.org>

US FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. NUTRITION LABELING AND EDUCATION ACT

The FDA regulates labeling of packaged foods, nutrient claims and health claims for foods and dietary supplements. Detailed information on food labels and related claims can be found at the FDA web site.

See <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/>

CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN PUBLIC INTEREST

The “Best Bites” program rates commercial food products in “Nutrition Action” magazine. The criteria for classifying foods into best/better bites varies by food product.

See: <http://www.cspinet.org>

(Source: North Carolina Blueprint for Changing Policies and Environments in Support of Healthy Eating)