

Nutrition & Dietary Guidelines

The high prevalence of obesity and related chronic non-communicable diseases in adults has become a burden on the Jamaican population resulting in reduced quality of life, personal health and wellbeing. Young adults pose a unique health challenge as 1 in 10 remains undernourished even though the vast majority tend towards being overweight or obese. Young adults represent the majority of the student population at the UWI, and the UWI has as a primary objective to improve the nutritional profile of our constituents by increasing the access to healthy, affordable foods to assist our students and staff in making informed food choices that should reduce the risk of lifestyle related diseases. By improving access to and the supply of healthier alternatives, the UWI anticipates greater impact on the food choice of final purchase and actual consumption by students and staff.

The global transition towards obesity and poor eating patterns can be attributed in part to the shift in the food and restaurant environment away from traditional and indigenous healthful foods and toward low-quality, ultra processed foods. This has resulted in the majority of the population consuming less than the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables; excess amounts of sugar primarily as sweetened beverages; and an increasing amount of less nutritious, energy dense foods that are high in refined sugars, sodium and fat, particularly saturated and trans- fats. The quality of food is further degraded by using unhealthy methods of food preparation with ultra-processed ingredients.

The UWI will depend on the food service providers (food establishments/concessionaires/vendors/caterers) to return to having a more positive influence on the campus food environment by facilitating good eating behaviours thereby helping to reduce negative health outcomes. The UWI intends for a campus food environment that will improve the overall health and nutritional profile of the student and staff population, while comprehensively protecting the interests of all stakeholders. Foods available to students and staff will have to support the UWI's dietary recommendations and requirements. Food service providers are primary stakeholders who are expected to play a unique and critical role in helping to promote and facilitate healthy eating by providing the recommended foods and in accordance with the recommended guidelines.

The general goals of the UWI are to ensure access to foods and beverages for students and staff that:

1. Provide healthy and nutritious options
2. Support the UWI's mandate of health and wellness
3. Encourage the development and maintenance of healthy eating
4. Increase the provision for the special dietary needs of persons with existing health conditions

Dietary recommendations across the Caribbean have a primary goal of reducing overweight and diet-related illnesses by promoting increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, staple foods, whole grains, legumes and nuts; with moderate amounts of lean meats and high quality dairy. Concurrently, recommendations aim for the reduction in foods of poor nutritive value which characterise those ultra-processed foods providing excess fats, salt or sugars, and which often have minimal if any fibre or essential vitamins and minerals. In addition to commercially prepared, ultra-processed foods, food to be discouraged are those prepared using unhealthy methods which require the use of excess amounts of salt, -sugar and fats. To avoid these high risk foods, current dietary guidelines recommend having a more plant-based and high fibre diet incorporating minimally processed foods. This includes using more of whole fruit, vegetables and peas and beans; with reduced amounts of lean meats, chicken and fish. The following food and nutrients should be minimized during food service and preparation to further reduce risk of obesity and related dietary diseases:

- Sodium, including added salt or high sodium condiments and sauces
- Excess total fats, saturated fats and *trans*-fats
- Sugar-sweetened beverages with more than 6g sugars/100mL. And foods and beverages prepared with added sugars and sweeteners, including non-caloric/non-nutritive ‘artificial’ sweeteners.
- Other Ultra-processed foods high in salt, sugars, fats, saturated fats, trans fats and/or calories (e.g. High-fat canned meats, macaroni and cheese, snacks, salted chips, candies, desserts, sweetened dairy)

With these guidelines in mind, food service providers are encouraged to formulate their decisions with an emphasis on preserving optimum nutritional value in the foods being offered rather than just the cost. Food service providers should endeavour to provide healthy, nutritious and affordable foods, while restricting the amounts and types of foods of poor nutritional quality and which are not recommended. Only in this way will the risk of food-based illnesses be reduced.

The following may be used as a practical guide to assist with compliance of food based guidelines. Below is a listing of foods and preparation methods that may help both consumers and food providers in school and worksite canteens in understanding healthful categories of foods which benefits the promotion, identification and consumption of preferred foods.

- 1. Recommended** – Fresh fruits, vegetables and staple foods (including rice, root and tree provisions, cereal and grain products including rice, corn, oats, etc.) should always form at least 60% of the daily meal offerings providing the required energy and nutrients. These shall be prepared using fresh or minimally processed ingredients, with little or no added sugars, salt and fat
Food service providers should place these foods in a prominent position, and promote in a manner that makes it attractive and interesting to students. Priority should be placed on making these foods the best choices. Examples of these foods include:

- **FRUIT** (mainly whole, fresh fruit, but may be frozen or canned without added sweeteners like syrups and sugars. Fruit should be prepared with little or no added salt, fat or sugars.
- **VEGETABLES** (mainly fresh, but may be frozen or canned). Serve fresh vegetables whenever possible. Cooked vegetables should be prepared with little or no added salt, fat or sugars.
- **STAPLES** – (e.g. Breadfruit, yams, green bananas, potato) otherwise called ‘starchy vegetables’. Served steamed, boiled, baked or using other suitable low-fat methods whenever possible, with little or no added fat, salt or sugars
- **CEREALS** – Ready-to-eat cereals that are whole grain, high-fibre, sugar-free, low-fat. Other cereals e.g. rice, whole-grain pasta, cornmeal, oats, baked or prepared using low-fat methods with no added salts, fats and/or sugars
- **DAIRY** – Low-fat, fat-free milks or cheeses, plain or low-fat yogurt
- **LEGUMES & NUTS** – e.g. Peas, beans or nuts. Prepared with no added salt, fats or sugars – not fried. These form foods of good quality proteins of high nutritive value.
- **MEATS/FISH/POULTRY** – Lean meats, poultry and fish, preferably with visible skin and excess fat removed, and prepared using low-fat methods (e.g.: baked, broiled, grilled, or steamed with little or no added salt, fats or sugars). Includes eggs and also canned fish in water
- **WATER** – mineral, tap or bottled.
- **BEVERAGES** – Decaffeinated coffee and teas. Beverages with less than 2.5g Sugars/100mL (or 0.5 teaspoon sugar per 100mL)
- **FRUIT JUICES** – 100% fruit juice with no added sugar or sweetener (e.g. fresh, natural coconut water)

2. INTERMEDIARY – moderately nutritious with some valuable nutrients, but pose a risk to high caloric intake and high levels of sodium, fat and sugars if consumed in excess. Foods in this category should be no more than 30% of the daily offerings. Food service providers should place foods falling in this category in a less prominent position, should be sold in smaller servings, and should not form part of marketing promotions unless to highlight an improvement in nutritional value. Examples of foods that fall within this list are:

- **FRUIT** – dried
- **VEGETABLES** – Processed vegetable sauces (tomato sauce), vegetable dishes prepared with added fat or salt or salted meats/fish
- **STAPLES** – (e.g. Breadfruit, yams, green bananas, potato) otherwise called ‘starchy vegetables’. Prepared in a mixed dish with minimal fat, salt or sugars
- **CEREALS, BREADS & BISCUITS** – low in fibre (<2g per serving) or contains added-sugars, salt and fat
- **DAIRY** – Full-fat dairy (e.g. whole milk, yogurt, cheeses)

- **LEGUMES & NUTS** – peas, beans & nuts prepared using moderate amounts of fat as part of a mixed meal using meats, cream based sauces or gravies.
- **MEATS** –Lean meats, poultry and fish, preferably with visible skin and excess fat removed, and prepared using moderate-fat methods (e.g.: stewed or braised with little or no added salt, fats or sugars).Canned fish in oil (e.g. sardines, tuna, salmon).
- **BEVERAGES** – Sugar-free “artificially sweetened” beverages, Fruit flavoured, unsweetened or low-calorie waters, diet sodas
- **PASTRIES** – Reduced-fat pastry items, sweetened breads and dough products (e.g. Easter bun with raisins)

3. Not recommended – provide little or no nutritional value comprising foods that are known to be energy dense; high in calories, sugars, salts and unhealthy fats; or likely to promote an increased risk of food related illness.

Food service providers are expected to minimize the promotion of these foods and ensure that they form only a minimal component of total offerings, accounting for no more than 20%. Examples of foods that fall within this list are:

- **FRUIT** – Sugar-coated or prepared with excess sugar or syrup (e.g. Jams, jellies, pie-filling)
- **VEGETABLES** – salted or sugar-coated snacks, vegetables cooked or served in brine or other sources of high sodium, or sugar and fat
- **STAPLES** – Prepared with excess fat, salt or sugars e.g. Batter-fried potatoes, fried chips
- **CEREALS** – Sugar-coated or deep fried
- **DAIRY** – Sweetened e.g. condensed milk; ice-creams, full-cream yogurts with sweetened fruits or condiments
- **LEGUMES & NUTS** – e.g. Peas, beans or nuts prepared with a candy- or sugar-based coating
- **MEATS** – Processed meats, frankfurters, sausages and deli meats. High fat and/or salted meats/fish/chicken including canned varieties; deep-fried in batter, skin and fat not removed.
- **BEVERAGES** – Sweetened beverages such as sodas, sweetened fruit juices and “Energy” drinks. Any beverage with more than 6g sugars/100mL (1.5teaspoons of sugar per 100mL) is considered having excess sugars. Alcoholic beverages.
- Deep-fried food of any description
- Full-fat pastry e.g. puff pastry of any description
- Food of any description that has a candy- or sugar-based coating
- Food of any description that is prepared with excess salt or sodium

General food preparation methods and promotion:

- Water must always be available and be promoted as the preferred beverage option
- Beverages with 100% fruit juice and prepared with no added sugars/sweeteners may also be promoted
- Prepared beverages should be unsweetened or prepared with a minimal amount of sweeteners. Any beverage (including fruit-based) that contains sweeteners (sugar, syrup, non-caloric sweetener) shall be appropriately labelled as having sweeteners. E.g. Soursop Juice (with sugar/syrup/artificial sweetener)
- Sweetened beverages or those with artificial, non- caloric sweeteners shall not be encouraged or displayed by way of increased marketing or promotion activities
- Fruits and vegetables shall be promoted daily; provided whole or combined within meals.
- Emphasis shall be on using fresh, unprocessed or minimally processed ingredients. This includes those containing little or no added sugars, salt, and minimizing the use of products high in saturated or trans-fats
- Remove skin and visible fat from meats and poultry prior to preparation
- Use lean meats and poultry for meat-containing dishes
- Incorporate fruits and vegetables in meat dishes where appropriate
- Alternate protein sources, such as peas and beans, shall be included in the menu to accommodate vegetarians as well as persons seeking to have a more-plant-based diet
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- Items that fall within the list of foods/beverages NOT recommended shall not be promoted or positioned to encourage or entice consumer purchase
- All foods shall be kept at their respective safe-temperature

The foregoing is meant to be a guideline with which to formulate menus and food selections to be offered by food establishments on campus. The sample list of foods described is in no way exhaustive.