**Four Food Group Key Messages**

1) Vegetables and Fruit  
Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.  
● Dark green vegetables are important sources of folate. Examples include broccoli, spinach, romaine lettuce, green beans, brussels sprouts and bok choy.  
● Orange vegetables are rich in carotenoids such as beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A. These foods include carrots, squash and sweet potatoes. Some orange-coloured fruit such as apricots, cantaloupe, mango and papaya are also important sources of carotenoids. You can eat them in place of an orange vegetable.

Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.  
Most vegetables and fruit are naturally low in fat. Examples of higher-fat choices include French fries, onion rings, salads with large amounts of dressing, and fruit served with cream. Choose fresh fruit, unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit packed in water or juice. Look at the nutrition facts table on the package to find the amount of fat and salt (sodium) in prepared and packaged vegetables. Use  
fresh or dried herbs, spices, flavoured vinegars or lemon juice instead of salt to enhance the flavour of vegetables.

Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice.  
Vegetables and fruit contain fibre, while their juice contains little to none. Fibre can help you feel full and satisfied. Youth should be  
encouraged to try a variety of vegetables and fruit.

2) Grain Products  
Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.  
Whole grains and whole-grain foods are composed of all three layers of the grain seed or kernel:  
● The bran (outer layer) provides all of the fibre as well as B vitamins, minerals (such as magnesium, iron and zinc), phytochemicals  
and some protein.  
● The endosperm (middle layer) accounts for the majority of the weight of the grain and is composed mostly of carbohydrate and  
protein.  
● The germ (inner layer) provides B vitamins, unsaturated fats, vitamin E, minerals and phytochemicals.

Examples of whole grains include brown rice, bulgur, pot barley, quinoa, whole oats or oatmeal, whole-grain wheat and whole rye. You can find out if a product is made with whole grain by reading the ingredient list on the food label. Whole-grain foods will have the words “whole” or “whole grain” followed by the name of the grain as one of the first ingredients.

Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.  
Baked goods such as cakes, croissants, doughnuts, pastries, pies and most cookies and muffins will add extra calories, fat, sugar and/ or salt (sodium) to the diet and should be limited. These foods are typically low in fibre and are not usually made with whole grains.

Use the ingredient list and nutrition facts table on food labels to compare products and make informed choices.Choose products that have as little trans fat and saturated fat as possible. Avoid products that have “partially hydrogenated” or “vegetable oil shortening” in the ingredient list.

3) Milk and Alternatives  
Drink skim, 1% or 2% milk each day.  
Everyone should drink two cups of low-fat milk each day to obtain adequate vitamin D. Drinking low-fat milk is an effective way to consume protein, calcium, magnesium, riboflavin, vitamin A, vitamin B12, vitamin D and zinc while minimizing the amount of saturated fat and calories consumed. Fortified soy beverage can be used as an alternative to milk. Rice, potato and almond beverages may be fortified; however, these types of beverages do not contain the level of protein found in milk and fortified soy beverage. Look for the word “fortified” on the label of soy beverages, as only these contain added vitamins and minerals to make them a nutritionally adequate alternative. It’s important to shake the container since added calcium may stick to the package lining.

Select lower-fat milk alternatives.  
Lower-fat yogurts are those with 2% milk fat (M.F.) or less. Lower-fat cheeses have 20% M.F. or less. Selecting these lower-fat  
products helps to reduce saturated fat intake.

4) Meat and Alternatives  
Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.  
Beans, lentils and tofu are sources of protein, fibre and folate. Eating more of these meat alternatives helps to minimize the amount of saturated fat in the diet.

Eat at least two Canada’s Food Guide servings of fish each week.  
Fish is a great source of protein. It is low in saturated fat, with some types containing omega-3 fatty acids. People are encouraged to eat at least two Canada’s Food Guide servings (150 grams) of fish each week to help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Choose fish such as char, herring, mackerel, rainbow trout, salmon and sardines as these are good sources of omega-3 fats.

Fish should be cooked using lower-fat preparation methods, such as baking or broiling. Deep-fried fish or fast-food fish sandwiches do not offer the same cardiovascular benefits.Certain types of fish contain high levels of methylmercury, a strong toxin that concentrates in the muscle tissue of fish and shellfish. Higher methylmercury levels are typically found in large predatory fish, such as white (albacore) tuna, shark, king mackerel and swordfish, which accumulate methylmercury over their lifespan. Choose fish that are low in methylmercury. For canned tuna, youth should be offered canned “light” tuna.

Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no fat.  
Canada’s Food Guide emphasizes lean cuts of meat and skinless poultry to minimize the amount of saturated fat in the diet. Lean meat, poultry and fish become higher-fat choices once they are fried, deep fried or served with higher-fat sauces. Canada’s Food Guide recommends baking, broiling, poaching or roasting meats and allowing the fat to drain off.