



Nutritional Standards

in Health and Social Care



**For staff and visitors
across catering facilities
including retail outlets
and vending.**

Revised 2025



The following organisations
support this guidance



Document endorsed by



The Association
of UK Dietitians



Foreword

Nutrition related ill-health is now the leading cause of preventable illness and death across the developed world. This is the result of a food environment that makes unhealthy choices far too accessible, while healthier options remain limited and difficult to access. Within our Health and Social Care settings, we have a unique opportunity and a clear responsibility to lead by example. Staff and visitors must have access to nutritious, balanced and appealing food that supports health and overall wellbeing.

As Health Minister, I am proud to endorse these revised Nutritional Standards for Health and Social Care, which will come into effect from September 2025. These updated standards demonstrate our continued commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of people across Northern Ireland who rely on health and social care services.

Good nutrition is fundamental to good health. The food and drink provided in our hospital and care settings, canteens, coffee docks, shops and vending machines must meet the highest standards, not only in safety and quality, but in supporting the health and wellbeing of all staff and visitors. These standards will ensure that all meals are balanced and nourishing.

This update builds on the foundations laid by the previous versions of the Nutritional Standards. It reflects the

latest scientific evidence, evolving public health priorities, and feedback from those working at every level of the Health and Social Care (HSC) system. Developed collaboratively with dietitians, nutritionists, catering professionals and procurement services, the standards align with the Eatwell Guide, government dietary recommendations, and the latest requirements for food safety and allergen management.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this important work. Your expertise and dedication have shaped a robust set of standards that will help deliver consistent, high-quality nutrition across all health and social care settings and, in doing so, support better health outcomes for everyone who relies on our services.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health



Contents

1 Executive summary	6
2 Nutritional Standards Steering Group	7
3 Nutritional Standards for Health and Social Care Review Group (2024/25)	8
4 Introduction	9
Development of the Standards	10
Implementation and application of the Standards	10
Food-based standards	11
The Eatwell Guide	11
Industry guidance	12
5 Nutritional Standards 2025	17
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	17
Fruit and vegetables	18
Dairy and alternatives	21
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	22
Oils and Spreads	25
Other food and drink high in fat, salt and sugar	26
Food environment standards	29
Guidance for vending machines	30
Guidance for private retail outlets	31
6 Calories on menus	32
7 Future development	33
8 References	34

1 Executive Summary

The impact of the food environment on achieving a balanced diet and good health is well known. It is essential to promote and provide healthier food choices.

- In terms of providing food that adheres to nutritional standards to staff and visitors throughout healthcare facilities; and
- In leading system change and modelling good practice that will improve standards across Northern Ireland (NI) and help shift the norm of food offerings to become healthier

In 2017, through the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group, the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Safefood, in partnership with HSC colleagues, produced Nutritional Standards for catering for staff and visitors in HSC settings. The Standards build on the current valuable work that is underway within HSC Trusts to encourage healthier eating amongst staff and visitors and will strengthen activities at a regional level.

The principles that guided the development and implementation of the Nutritional Standards (reviewed and updated in 2022 and 2025) are summarised below.

The Standards are food-based standards modelled on the Eatwell Guide.

The Standards apply to all facilities that serve food or beverages to staff or visitors operating within HSC settings. This includes catering facilities, privately owned retail units and vending machines.

The Standards are to be adhered to when food contracts are being specified in the procurement process (the sourcing, buying and provision or tendering process), and should be applied when planning menus and serving food.

The FSA are working in partnership with Local Councils to introduce nutritional standards to the food and drink offered to staff and visitors in council facilities, starting with vending. The outcomes of this work will help to inform implementation beyond HSC settings, with the aim of rolling out nutritional standards across the wider public sector in Northern Ireland.

2 Nutritional Standards Steering Group

Fionnuala Close
Food Standards Agency

Gary Maxwell
Department of Health

Hannah McCourt
Public Health Agency

Joana Caldeira Fernandes da Silva
Safefood

Joanne Casey
Dietetic Manager's Forum

John Johnston
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Laura Taylor
Public Health Agency

Marie Kennedy
Business Services Organisation

Michelle Young
Food Standards Agency

Orla Boyle
Business Services Organisation

Rodney Smyth
Business Services Organisation

Past members

Andrew Castles
Safefood

Angela McComb
Public Health Agency

Brenda Nugent
Dietetic Managers Forum

Caroline Bloomfield
Public Health Agency

Caroline Gunn
Safefood

Claire Holmes
Food Standards Agency

David Tumilty
Public Health Agency

Deborah McNeill
Hospital Caterers Association

Donna Wilson
Implementation Lead for Health and
Social Care settings

Elizabeth McKnight
South Eastern Trust

Florence McAllister
Business Services Organisation

Jennifer McBratney
Public Health Agency

Karen McLaughlin
Hospital Caterers Association

Marian O'Reilly
Safefood

Naomi Davidson
Food Standards Agency

Pauline Mulholland
South Eastern Trust

Rachel Doherty
Public Health Agency

Sharon Gilmore
Food Standards Agency

Tammy Quinn
Business Services Organisation

3 Nutritional Standards for Health and Social Care Review Group (2024/25)

Alannah Duffy
Safefood

Collette O'Brien
Public Health Dietitians Group

Daniel Foran
Safefood

Hannah McCourt
Public Health Agency

Joana Caldeira Fernandes da Silva
Safefood

John Johnston
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Marie Kennedy
Business Services Organisation

Michelle Young
Food Standards Agency

Neil Casey
Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Orla Boyle
Business Services Organisation

Rodney Smyth
Business Services Organisation



4 Introduction

Evidence has shown that a healthy, balanced diet with adequate amounts of physical activity can help to maintain a healthy weight and lower the risk of chronic diseases including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey¹ for Northern Ireland reported that between 2017-2023 the population consumed too much saturated fat and added sugar, and not enough fruit, vegetables, oily fish and fibre compared with current government recommendations. In addition, the 2023/24 Health Survey (NI)² shows that around two-thirds (64%) of adults were living with either overweight (37%) or obesity (28%), with obesity rising from 23% in 2010/11 to 28% in 2023/24.

The significant role of the workplace and employers in promoting healthier lifestyles and supporting the creation of a healthier food environment at work is increasingly recognised. As a major employer throughout the United Kingdom (UK), the Health Service should promote and protect health and lead by setting an example to employers in both public and private sectors.

In NI there is much valuable work being done locally within HSC Trusts to promote healthier eating in the workplace. Designing healthier menus, displaying calories on menus and implementing vending policies are some examples of this.

To further support this work, and in line with key objectives of the regional obesity prevention strategy, the PHA, the FSA and Safefood, in partnership with HSC colleagues, developed Nutritional Standards for catering in HSC settings in NI. These Standards aim to support the provision of healthy, affordable and sustainable food choices for staff and visitors in HSC settings. These Standards can also be adopted for use by the wider public sector.

¹ MRC Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge (MRC EU); National Centre for Social Research (NatCen Social Research); Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Department of Health and Social Care (OHID). National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS): Results for Years 10 to 15 (combined) of the Rolling Programme for Northern Ireland (2017 to 2023)

² Department of Health. Health Survey Northern Ireland: First Results 2023/24. Belfast: 2024.
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-survey-northern-ireland-first-results-202324>

Development of the Standards

To inform the development of the Standards, a review was undertaken of the work being done in the other areas of the UK where nutritional standards have been successfully introduced in Health Service catering. This included the “Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services”³ and the supporting resource “Healthier and More Sustainable Catering Toolkit”⁴ in England, the Scottish Government and National Health Service (NHS) Health Scotland’s Healthy Living Award⁵, the voluntary guidance on healthy food and drink choices for staff and visitors⁶ and the Corporate Health Standard award in Wales⁷. These initiatives were considered by the Working Group and, in conjunction with public health, nutrition and dietetics, catering and procurement specialists from across the region, were adapted for use in NI.

The Nutritional Standards for catering in HSC have been modelled on the Eatwell Guide⁸ and based on the Public Health England (now Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) publication “Healthier and More Sustainable Catering: A Toolkit for Serving Food to Adults”⁴. The authors wish to thank colleagues

in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities for permission to use and adapt the toolkit used in England, and for support and advice, particularly Dr Louis Levy, and many thanks also to Jane Crossley, Department of Health.

The authors also wish to acknowledge colleagues in the Scottish Government and Food Standards Scotland for sharing their knowledge and experiences acquired through implementing the Healthy Living Award and Healthcare Retail Standard, particularly Anne Lee, NHS Health Scotland.

Acknowledgement is also extended to our colleagues in Wales, in particular Judith John, Consultant Dietitian in Public Health for the Welsh Government, for insight and information relating to the Corporate Health Standards for Wales, and to Jessica Bearman, Lead Dietitian for Procurement, NHS Wales.

Implementation and application of the Standards

The PHA, FSA and Safefood, in partnership with HSC colleagues, have developed and are supporting implementation of the Nutritional Standards in catering for staff and visitors in HSC settings.

³ Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Government Buying Standards. London: 2015. To note the GBS for food and catering services were republished in 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-procurement-the-gbs-for-food-and-catering-services>

⁴ Public Health England. Healthier and More Sustainable Catering: A Toolkit for Serving Food to Adults. London: 2014. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/648743/healthier_and_more_sustainable_catering_adult_toolkit.pdf 2017.

⁵ National Health Service, Health Scotland. Healthy Living Award. Glasgow: 2011. [Cited 2016] Available online: <http://www.healthylivingaward.co.uk/index>

⁶ Welsh Government. Supporting Healthy Food and Drink Choices for Staff and Visitors in Hospital. 2011.

⁷ Welsh Government. Corporate Health Standard: A Quality Framework and Award for Health and Well-being in the Workplace. 2016.

⁸ Public Health England. The Eatwell Guide: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland; 2016 [Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>].

(The Standards do not apply to patient food and beverage provision as there are already standards in place for food and beverages served to patients).

These Standards will be of interest to staff involved in catering and menu planning along with those involved in food contract specifications, procurement and dietetics.

These Standards apply to all facilities serving food or beverages within HSC settings. This includes catering facilities, privately owned retail units and vending machines.

The Standards should be adhered to when food contracts are being specified in procurement processes (the sourcing, buying and provision or tendering process) and should also be applied when planning menus and serving food.

The FSA are working in partnership with Local Councils to introduce nutritional standards to the food and drink offered to staff and visitors in council facilities, starting with vending. The outcomes of this work will help to inform implementation beyond HSC settings, with the aim of rolling out nutritional standards across the wider public sector in Northern Ireland.

Food-based standards

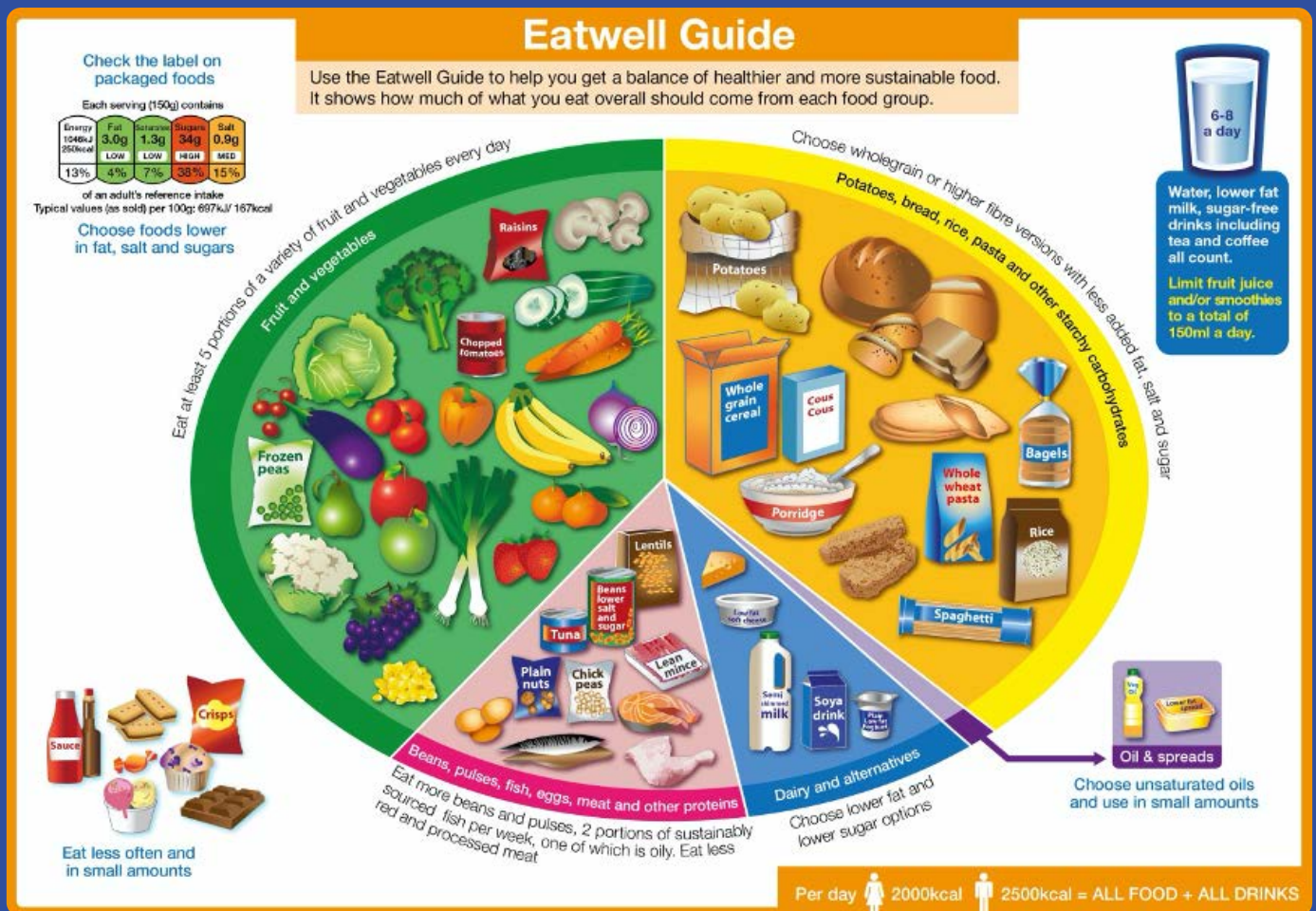
The Nutritional Standards for catering in HSC settings are food-based standards that have been developed around the Eatwell Guide⁸. Government recommendations for a healthy, balanced diet are reflected in the Guide. The FSA in NI launched the refreshed Eatwell Guide locally on 17th March 2016.

It replaces the Eatwell Plate, which has been providing guidance since 2007. The Eatwell Guide reflects updated dietary recommendations on consumption of sugar, fibre and starchy carbohydrates from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's report "Carbohydrates and Health", published in 2015.

The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions of the main food groups that form a healthy, balanced diet, focusing on the following:

- Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates, choosing wholegrain versions where possible
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya, rice or nut drinks), choosing lower fat and lower sugar options (and calcium-fortified dairy alternative options)
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including two portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily)
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat these in small amounts.
- Drink six to eight cups or glasses of fluid a day
- If consuming foods and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar, have these less often and in small amounts



In addition to these messages, consumers are reminded to eat less salt (no more than 6 grams [g] a day for adults), to become more active and achieve a healthy weight; it is also very important not to skip breakfast.

The Eatwell Guide also provides information on calorie guidelines for adults and on front-of-pack nutrition labelling.

Additional information on the Eatwell Guide can be found at the FSA website: www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/the-eatwell-guide

Industry guidance

Where industry guidance exists (for example, UK-wide salt targets and sugar reduction guidance for industry⁹) it should be applied when procuring products across all categories. Any updates to these and any guidance that is published in the future should also be applied.

The following table outlines the specific requirements that must be met before a nutrition or health claim can be applied to a product, for example “high fibre”, “low fat” or “sugar-free”. Nutrition claims are only permitted if they are listed in the Annex of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006, lastly amended by Regulation (EU) No 1047/2012

⁹ Public Health England. Salt reduction targets for 2014. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/salt-reduction-targets-for-2024>



Table 1: Nutrition and health claims¹⁰

High fibre	Product contains at least 6 g of fibre per 100 g or at least 3 g of fibre per 100 kilocalories, or food calories (kcal)
Source of fibre	Product contains at least 3 g of fibre per 100g or at least 1.5 g of fibre per 100 kcal
Low fat	Product contains no more than 3 g of fat per 100 g for solids or 1.5 g of fat per 100 millilitres (ml) for liquids (1.8 g of fat per 100 ml for semi-skimmed milk)
Low saturated fat	The sum of saturated fatty acids and trans fatty acids in the product does not exceed 1.5 g per 100 g for solids or 0.75 g per 100 ml for liquids and, in either case, the sum of saturated fatty acids and trans-fatty acids must not provide more than 10 per cent of energy
Low sugar	Product contains no more than 5 g of sugars per 100 g for solids or 2.5 g of sugars per 100 ml for liquids
Low sodium or low salt	Product contains no more than 0.12 g of sodium, or 0.3 g of salt, per 100 g or per 100 ml. For waters other than natural mineral waters falling within the scope of Directive 80/777/EEC, this value should not exceed 2 mg of sodium per 100 ml
Sugar-free	Product contains no more than 0.5 g of sugars per 100 g or 100 ml
With no added sugars	Product does not contain any added monosaccharides or disaccharides or any other food used for its sweetening properties. If sugars are naturally present in the food, the following indication should also appear on the label: "Contains naturally occurring sugars"
Reduced saturated fat	Where the sum of saturated fatty acids and of trans-fatty acids in the product is at least 30 per cent less than in a similar product; and where the content in trans-fatty acids is equal to or less than in a similar product
Reduced salt	Where the reduction in salt content is at least 25 per cent compared to a similar product

¹⁰ European Commission. Nutrition Claims. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/labelling_nutrition/claims/nutrition_claims_en

Table 2 provides definitions of some of the terms used within the Nutritional Standards

On display	The food/drink products which are visible to potential customers in the catering and/or retail environment
Main meal	A serving of food which provides the greatest contribution to the energy and range of nutrients required daily i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner.
Raw weight	The weight of the uncooked food



5 Nutritional Standards 2025

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates



Nutritional Standards

- 1.1 Starchy sources of fibre (for example, wholewheat pasta and potatoes with skins, brown rice or brown bread) must be available at all meal times.
- 1.2 At least 50 per cent of dried or boxed breakfast cereals on display must be high in fibre – they must contain more than 6 g of fibre per 100 g and must not exceed 12.3 g of total sugars per 100 g.
- 1.3 At least 50 per cent of breads on display must be a source of fibre, such as wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, wheaten and granary options – they must contain more than 3 g of fibre per 100 g.
- 1.4 At least 50 per cent of the bread in prepacked and freshly made sandwiches must be a source of fibre, such as wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, wheaten and granary options – they must contain more than 3 g of fibre per 100 g.
- 1.5 At least 75 per cent of breads (on display) must meet UK-wide salt targets for the food industry⁸.
- 1.6 At least 75 per cent of breakfast cereals on display must meet UK-wide salt targets for the food industry¹⁰.
- 1.7 Salt must not be added to the following foods during cooking or before service; pasta, rice, potatoes (including chips and potato products).



What foods are included

- Breads – wholegrain, wholemeal, granary, brown, white, wheaten and soda bread, potato bread, pitta bread, chapattis, tortillas, paninis and bagels.
- Potatoes, sweet potatoes and squashes (except if they are eaten as a vegetable portion for a main meal – in this case, sweet potatoes or squashes do not count as a starchy food).
- Breakfast cereals – porridge, wheat biscuits, crisped rice and flaked cereals.
- Rice, couscous, bulgar wheat (cracked wheat), semolina, tapioca, maize, cornmeal and quinoa.
- Pasta, including wholewheat pasta.
- Noodles, including rice, udon, soba and egg noodles.
- Other grains, for example oats, millet, barley, buckwheat, rye and spelt.

Fruit and vegetables



Nutritional Standards

- 2.1 Fruit or vegetables are available across all catering locations. In restaurants, at least 5 different types of fruit or vegetables must be available every day.
 - 2.2 A minimum of two vegetables or salad vegetables must be available at each meal service.
 - 2.3 Tinned vegetables and pulses must meet UK-wide salt targets for industry⁹.
 - 2.4 Tinned fruit served must be in its own juice. Choose those with no added sugar.
 - 2.5 A piece of fruit must be cheaper than a portion of hot or cold dessert*.
 - 2.6 Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite dishes such as Bolognese sauce or curry must include a minimum of half a portion* (raw weight) of vegetables or fruit per serving. This portion could be from a number of different fruits or vegetables.
 - 2.7 At least 75 per cent of fruit juice, vegetable juice and smoothies on display must be in single serve packs (pack size 150 to 200 ml).
 - 2.8 If offered, at least one salad option must be without salad dressing. In pre-packed salad boxes, a minimum of one salad box should have the salad dressing in a separate container.
 - 2.9 Sugar and salt must not be added to this food group during cooking or before service.
- *A portion of fruit or vegetables is 80 g and a portion of dried fruit is 30 g.



What foods are included

- Fresh, frozen, tinned, juiced and dried fruit.
- Fresh, frozen, tinned and juiced vegetables.
- Unsweetened, 100 per cent fruit and vegetable juices
- Beans and pulses are also included as “vegetables” but only count as a maximum of one portion per day.

⁹ Public Health England. Salt reduction targets for 2014. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/salt-reduction-targets-for-2024>





Dairy and alternatives



Nutritional Standards

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>3.1 Milk and dairy foods must be offered at all times.</p> <p>3.2 At least 75 per cent of milk must be low-fat, semi-skimmed, 1 per cent fat or skimmed milk.</p> <p>3.3 At least 50 per cent of all cheese used in meal preparation or on display must not exceed a total fat content of 25 g of fat per 100 g.</p> | <p>3.4 At least 75 per cent of yogurts (used in meal preparation or on display) must be low fat (that is, they must contain less than 3 g fat per 100 g) AND low sugar (that is, containing less than 11 g of sugar per 100 g).</p> <p>3.5 All plant-based alternative drinks must be fortified with calcium and unsweetened.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



What foods are included

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All types of pasteurised milk, including dried milk, reduced fat milk, goat's and sheep's milk.• All types of cheeses, for example cheddar, cottage cheese, cheese spreads, Edam, goat's cheese, Stilton and Camembert. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yogurt (fruit or plain, whole milk or low fat), or fromage frais.• Milk-based sauces, custard and milk puddings.• Fortified and unsweetened plant-based drinks and yogurts, for example rice, nut, oat and soya. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins



Nutritional Standards

- 4.1 A range of foods from this food group must be offered at each main meal.
- 4.2 A portion of fish must be offered at least twice a week, one portion of which must be oily fish, for example salmon or mackerel. A portion of fish is 140 g.
- 4.3 A vegetarian option must be offered at each main meal service. All vegetarian meals must contain a protein source. Cheese based vegetarian options must not be offered more than twice each week.
- 4.4 A portion of red or processed meat must not exceed 70 g on average cooked weight.
- 4.5 There must be at least two days each week (Monday to Friday) when no processed meat or processed poultry is served. This applies to all catering outlets, including salad and sandwich counters. Consider this standard in conjunction with standard 6.3 when menu planning.
- 4.6 At least 75 per cent of processed meat used and on display must meet UK-wide salt targets for industry¹⁰.
- 4.7 Meat and processed meat used or on display must be lower in saturated fat, where available.
- 4.8 Salt must not be added to this food group during cooking or before service.



What foods are included

- Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, poultry, nuts, seeds and other non-dairy sources of protein.
- Meat includes all cuts of fresh and frozen beef, lamb and pork.
- Processed meat includes ham, bacon, salami, corned beef, beef burgers, and sausages.
- Processed poultry includes chicken goujons, chicken burgers, chicken Kiev and chicken nuggets.
 - Poultry includes any fresh or frozen products.
- Fish includes any fresh, frozen and tinned fish.
- Fish products include fish cakes and fish fingers.
- Examples of oily fish are salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel, herring and pilchards. A portion of oily fish is 140 g.
- Eggs – boiled, poached, scrambled or fried – and omelettes.
- Beans and pulses, for example baked beans, chickpeas, butter beans, kidney beans and lentils, provide a good source of protein for people following a vegetarian or vegan diet.
- Other protein products suitable for people following a vegetarian or vegan diet include nuts, tofu, mycoprotein (a fungal protein source) and textured vegetable protein products (a soy protein source).





Oils and spreads



Nutritional Standards

- 5.1 All cooking oils must be high in monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats.
- 5.2 At least 75 per cent of all spreads used and on display must be based on monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats.
- 5.3 Salad dressings must be based on soya, rapeseed, corn, sunflower and olive oils.



What foods are included

- Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated oils such as maize, corn, safflower, sunflower, soya, olive and rapeseed.
- Spreads including low fat spreads made from these oils.
- Oil-based salad dressings containing unsaturated oils.

Other food and drink high in fat, salt and sugar



Nutritional Standards

- 6.1 All mayonnaise and salad creams (including those used in potato salads and coleslaws) must be low fat, light or reduced calorie versions, where available.
- 6.2 At least 75 per cent of preprepared ready meals and prepacked sandwiches on display must contain less than 6 g of saturated fat per portion.
- 6.3 A maximum of one hot main course option per service at lunch and dinner can be deep fried, batter or breadcrumb coated or in pastry. Consider this standard in conjunction with standard 4.5 when menu planning.
- 6.4 There must be at least two days each week (Monday to Friday) when high-fat starchy food such as chips, potato wedges, roast potatoes or garlic bread are not served. When these are served there must be at least one starchy side option on display that is not deep fried or coated in oil or butter.
- 6.5 When desserts are served, a single serving of dessert should not exceed 250 kcals per serving.
- 6.6 Lower fat alternatives to cream must be used in cooking, for example low fat yogurt, lower fat crème fraîche and fromage frais or any similar product that has less than 15 g of fat per 100 g.
- 6.7 Savoury snacks, including crisps, must have a calorie content per pack of 200 kcal or less.
- 6.8 All cold beverages available must be low calorie and therefore no added sugar beverages are to be offered. Note: Low calorie (low energy) beverages are products not containing more than 20 kcal (80 kilojoules, or kJ, per 100 ml) energy for liquids.
- 6.9 Confectionery, packet sweet and biscuit snacks must be offered in the smallest standard single serve portion size commercially available. This must not exceed 125 kcal per packet for confectionery and packet sweets and 200 kcal per serving for chocolate and biscuit snacks.
- 6.10 Traybakes and baked products for example, muffins, scones, brownies and caramel squares - must not exceed 250 kcal per serving.
- 6.11 Salt must not be added to this food group during cooking or before service.



What foods are included

- Chocolate, crisps, biscuits, pastries, cakes, puddings, ice cream, sugary soft drinks and sweets.
- Jams, honey and sugar.
- Sauces (such as rich, creamy or sweet sauces) and gravies.
- Butter, ghee, lard, suet, cooking oils (such as palm oil and coconut oil), oil-based salad dressings containing these oils, and mayonnaise.
- Cream and crème fraîche





Food environment standards

(for the promotion and display of healthier options)



Nutritional Standards

7.1 Promote involvement in implementing the Nutritional Standards within the catering/retail premises.

7.2 Ensure the healthier items within each category are displayed in the most prominent location, for example:

- healthier options from the hot meal servery
- breads that are a source of fibre
- high fibre cereals
- lower fat and lower sugar yogurt
- fresh fruit

7.3 Promote fresh fruit or salad as meal accompaniments or as a snack.

7.4 Do not provide chips or crisps as accompaniment to sandwiches.

7.5 Menus/menu boards must be clearly available for customers to see all food and drink items on offer and prices must be clearly displayed.

7.6 The healthier options must be more prominently displayed on the menu/menu board, this includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

7.7 Salt or salt substitutes must not be on display at tables.

7.8 Sugar sachets and cubes must not be on display at tables.

7.9 Remove food high in fat, salt and sugar from the till area in restaurants, for example:

- Chocolate
- Crisps
- Confectionery, packet sweets and biscuit snacks
- Traybakes

In small areas, such as coffee docks, where this may not be possible, please display fruit closest to the till area.

7.10 Free fresh tap water must always be available.

7.11 All promotions of meals and snacks must meet the Nutritional Standards.

7.12 Meal deals must meet the relevant Nutritional Standards and include at least one of the following:

- piece of fruit
- portion of vegetables
- vegetable based soup
- portion of salad
- water
- 100% fruit juice, vegetable juice or smoothie, which must be in a single serve pack (pack size 150 to 200 ml)

Consider participating in schemes that promote healthy options for consumers. For example, Calorie Wise, fruit loyalty schemes and healthy meal deals.

Guidance for vending machines

1. Savoury snacks must not exceed 200 kcals per packet.
2. Confectionery, packet sweets and biscuit snacks must be offered in the smallest, single serve portion size commercially available. This must not exceed:
 - a. 125 kcals per packet for confectionery and packet sweets
 - b. 200 kcals per packet for chocolate and biscuit snacks
3. All cold beverages available must be low calorie. Therefore, no beverages with added sugar are to be offered. Note: Low calorie (low energy) beverages are products not containing more than 20 kcals (80 kilojoules, or kJ) per 100 ml.
4. Cold beverage vending machines will have a split of 30% still or sparkling unflavoured water; and 70% low calorie carbonated or still beverages.
5. Fruit juice, vegetable juice and smoothies must be in single serve packs (pack size 150 to 200 ml).

Branding/information on vending machines will support health promoting messages.

Periodic reviews of the sales of vending products will be conducted. Work will continue towards increasing the range of healthier products lines alongside considerations of any new UK-published guidance on healthy eating/vending.



Guidance for private retail outlets

1. At least 50 per cent of the bread in prepacked and freshly made sandwiches must be a source of fibre, such as wholegrain, brown, wholemeal, wheaten and granary options – they must contain more than 3 g of fibre per 100 g.
2. At least 75 per cent of yogurts on display must be low fat (that is, they must contain less than 3 g fat per 100 g) and low sugar (that is, containing less than 11 g of sugar per 100 g).
3. At least 75 per cent of preprepared ready meals and prepacked sandwiches on display must contain less than 6 g of saturated fat per portion.
4. Savoury snacks, including crisps, must have a calorie content per pack of 200 kcal or less.
5. All cold beverages available must be low calorie and therefore no added sugar beverages are to be offered. Note: Low calorie (low energy) beverages are products not containing more than 20 kcal (80 kilojoules, or kJ, per 100 ml) energy for liquids.
6. Confectionery, packet sweet and biscuit snacks must be offered in the smallest standard single serve portion size commercially available. This must not exceed 125 kcal per packet for confectionery and packet sweets and 200 kcal per serving for chocolate and biscuit snacks.
7. Fruit juice, vegetable juice and smoothies must be in single serve packs (pack size 150 to 200 ml).

6 Calories on menus

Calorie labelling helps consumers to make informed choices when eating away from home and also helps caterers to provide lower calorie options.

Calories are a measure of the amount of energy in food. Knowing how many calories are in food can help consumers to balance energy eaten with energy used, which is the key to a healthy weight. As a guide, the average man needs around 2,500 calories a day to maintain a healthy body weight and the average woman needs around 2,000 calories a day.

When displaying calorie information, it is recommended that these four principles of calorie labelling are followed:

- Calorie information is displayed clearly and prominently at the point of choice
- Calorie information is provided for all standardised food and drink items sold or provided. (A standardised food or drink is on sale for at least 30 days a year)
- Calorie information is provided per portion/item/meal
- Information on average calorie requirements (for example, women need around 2,000 calories per day) is displayed clearly and prominently to help consumers make sense of calorie information provided with food and drink items

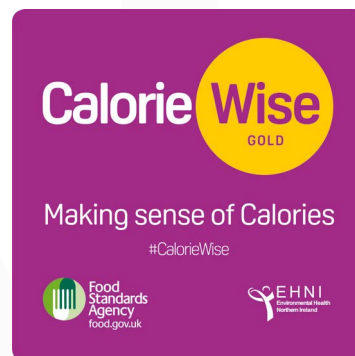
Calorie Wise is a free and voluntary scheme delivered by the FSA and district councils in NI. Calorie Wise helps food businesses to put calories on their menus according to the four principles above. Any catering business can join the scheme, whether it's a restaurant, takeaway, café, coffee shop, pub, sandwich shop or staff canteen.

Businesses can apply for either the Gold or Silver Calorie Wise Award. The only difference between the gold and silver award is the requirement to label all or 30 per cent of menu items with calorie information.

Businesses can work out the energy value of their menu items using the free online tool MenuCal, available at www.menucalni.co.uk. This tool will provide the energy information per portion, in kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal).

Taking part in the Calorie Wise scheme and using MenuCal to calculate energy content of menu items are useful steps towards implementation of the Nutritional Standards.

For more information visit www.food.gov.uk/businessguidance/calorie-wise



7 Future development

The development of Nutritional Standards in HSC settings has been the first step in the process towards making healthier choices available to staff and visitors across the public sector.

It has been recognised that further resources and support are required to successfully implement the Standards. Future developments include:

- Production of a tool to standardise analysis of menu cycles. This will provide catering staff with information to support the availability of healthier choice meal options for food produced on site at HSC and public sector food outlets
- Additional information or a “toolkit” to aid caterers in implementing the Nutritional Standards across HSC settings and the wider public sector
- A communication plan to increase awareness of the Nutritional Standards to all HSC staff and visitors who use catering, private retail and vending services
- Guidance on including the Nutritional Standards in tenders for procurement of catering services, particularly for use in local councils and Government departments



8 References

- 1 MRC Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge (MRC EU); National Centre for Social Research (NatCen Social Research); Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Department of Health and Social Care (OHID). *National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS): Results for Years 10 to 15 (combined) of the Rolling Programme for Northern Ireland (2017 to 2023)*
- 2 Department of Health. Health Survey Northern Ireland: First Results 2023/24. Belfast: 2024. <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-survey-northern-ireland-first-results-202324>
- 3 Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Government Buying Standards. London: 2015. To note the GBS for food and catering services were republished in 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-procurement-the-gbs-for-food-and-catering-services>
- 4 Public Health England. Healthier and More Sustainable Catering: A Toolkit for Serving Food to Adults. London: 2014.
- 5 National Health Service, Health Scotland. Healthy Living Award. Glasgow: 2011. [Cited 2016] Available online: <http://www.healthylivingaward.co.uk/index>
- 6 Welsh Government. Supporting Healthy Food and Drink Choices for Staff and Visitors in Hospital. 2011.
- 7 Welsh Government. Corporate Health Standard: A Quality Framework and Award for Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace. 2016.
- 8 Public Health England. The Eatwell Guide: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland; 2016 [Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>].
- 9 Public Health England. Salt reduction targets for 2014. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/salt-reduction-targets-for-2024>
- 10 European Commission. Nutrition Claims. Available from: https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/labelling-and-nutrition/nutrition-and-health-claims/nutrition-claims_en





The following organisations
support this guidance



Document endorsed by



The Association
of UK Dietitians

Next review date
August 2028