

Wellness

Administrative Procedure: 536.6



Discretionary Calories⁴

Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Why shouldn't I bring sweet treats for a classroom celebration?

Discretionary calories are the calories left after meeting nutrient requirements from the healthy foods that help our children grow, learn in school and stay healthy. This "leftover" amounts to only about 10% of total calories or about 150 calories per day for a young child. They are most often consumed as "empty calories" found in items high in solid fats and added sugars that lack vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, protein and fiber. Some parents would like their children to use them for... a lot of extra fruit or vegetables ... a little extra nutrient-rich milk, meat or bread...oil to fry a food... a dessert at a family occasion. *Let's leave these calories to the "discretion" of each family to use outside of the school day.* We hope parents appreciate being able to decide for their own student when treats will be served at home.

Moorhead Area Public Schools Nutrition Philosophy during students' school day

School meals are the main source of nutrition.

Snacks are to:

1. supplement the meal;
2. help, not hinder, students' nutrition;
3. provide serving size and calories based on age/activity;
4. be consumed infrequently.

Parents can decide on use of discretionary calories at home.

1. Age and Sex	2. Not Physically Active		3. Physically Active ¹		4. Based on NHANES 1999-2002 data ²
	Estimated Total Calorie Need	Estimated Discretionary Calorie Allowance	Estimated Total Calorie Need	Estimated Discretionary Calorie Allowance	Average Daily Discretionary Calories Consumed ²
Children 4-8 years old	1200-1400 calories	170	1400-1800 calories	170-195	719
Girls 9-13 years old	1600 calories	130	1600-2200 calories	130-290	810
Boys 9-13 years old	1800 calories	195	1800-2600 calories	195-410	
Girls 14-18 years old	1800 calories	195	2000-2400 calories	265-360	946
Boys 14-18 years old	2200 calories	290	2400-3200 calories	360-650	

Column 4 in the above chart shows that about 40% of calories children consume are from discretionary foods and beverages that lack nutrients needed for healthy growth. *The discretionary calories consumed can be reduced to the calorie allowance by cutting portion sizes and use of those items, and replacing them with nutrient-rich, healthy foods.*

We can use our estimated discretionary calorie allowance to:

- * Eat larger portions of nutrient-rich foods like fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat or fat free dairy products and lean protein sources.
- * Eat occasional portions of higher calorie forms of nutrient-rich foods that contain some solid fats and/or added sugars, such as 2% milk, cheese, sweetened cereals or yogurt.
- * Add small amounts of fats or sweeteners to foods, such as 1-2 teaspoons of gravy, salad dressings, syrup and butter.
- * Eat or drink infrequent small amounts of items that are mostly fats and caloric sweeteners, such as candy, soda and other sugar-added beverages.

1. These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get at least 30 minutes (lower calorie level) to at least 60 minutes (higher calorie level) of moderate physical activity most days.
2. Institute of Medicine. 2010. *School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children*. p51. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press
3. Chiqui, JF, et al. *Bridging the Gap*, Health Policy Center, University of IL at Chicago, 2009.
4. Based on http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/discretionary_calories_amount.html
5. Johnson, RK. *The American heart association dietary sugars intake and cardiovascular health: a scientific statement*. *Circulation*. 2009; 120: 101101020.



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How do I know what foods and beverages have high solid fat and added sugar discretionary calories?

Read food ingredient labels for the first, or most predominant, ingredients. Also, look for the grams of saturated fat and sugar on the nutrient label to see if a high percentage of the calories come from those sources. Remember to check calories in one serving. There may be more than one serving in a package. Stick with one serving or less.

“**Solid Fats**” are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter and shortening. Solid fats come from many animal foods and can be made from vegetable oils through a process called hydrogenation. This “saturates” them so we refer to them as saturated fats on labels. There should be less than 10% of calories from saturated fat to be a healthier item. Use higher saturated fat items sparingly.

Sources of solid fats include:

- ∞ Butter
- ∞ Beef fat (tallow, suet)
- ∞ Chicken fat
- ∞ Pork fat (lard)
- ∞ Stick margarine
- ∞ Shortening
- ∞ Creams



Foods high in solid fats include:

- ∞ Many types of pizza
- ∞ Many cheeses
- ∞ Ice cream
- ∞ Well-marbled cuts of meat
- ∞ Regular ground beef
- ∞ Bacon
- ∞ Sausages, pepperoni
- ∞ Poultry skin
- ∞ Baked goods such as cookies, donuts, pastries and croissants

“**Added Sugar**” are sugars and syrups that are added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation. We get far more than we need. The average American takes in around 22 teaspoons of sugar daily. This equals 355 calories. The highest sugar intake is among 14-18 year olds, who consume 34 teaspoons of sugar per day for 549 calories. The American Heart Association⁵ recommends no more than 100 calories per day for American women and no more than 150 calories per day for American men from added sugars. Strive for less added sugars in all age groups for health’s sake.

Names for added sugars on food labels include:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| ∞ brown sugar | ∞ glucose | ∞ molasses |
| ∞ corn sweetener | ∞ high-fructose | ∞ invert sugar |
| ∞ corn syrup | ∞ corn syrup | ∞ sugar |
| ∞ dextrose | ∞ honey | ∞ syrup |
| ∞ fructose | ∞ maltose | ∞ raw sugar |
| ∞ fruit juice concentrates | ∞ malt syrup | |
| ∞ lactose | | |



Discretionary foods high in solid fats and added sugars most consumed during the school day³:

- * Juice drinks/sport drinks/thirst quenchers/carbonated soda
- * Candy
- * Cookies, cakes and brownies
- * Chips

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