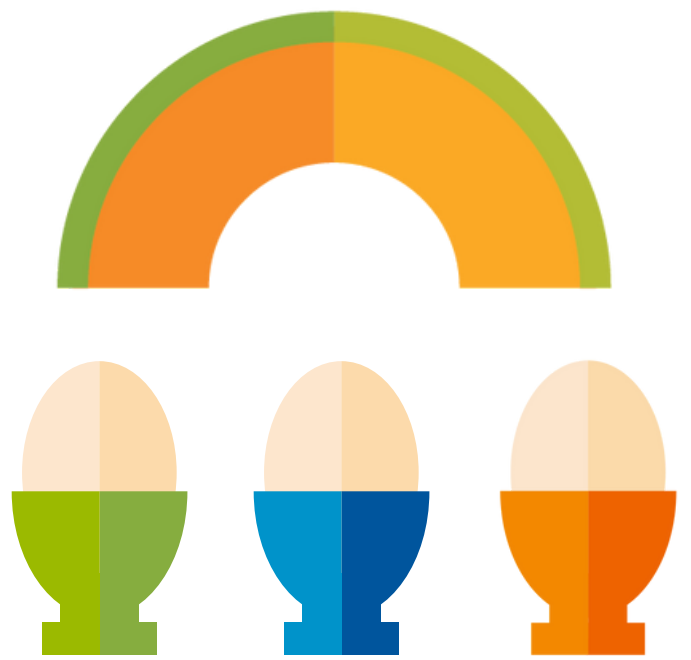
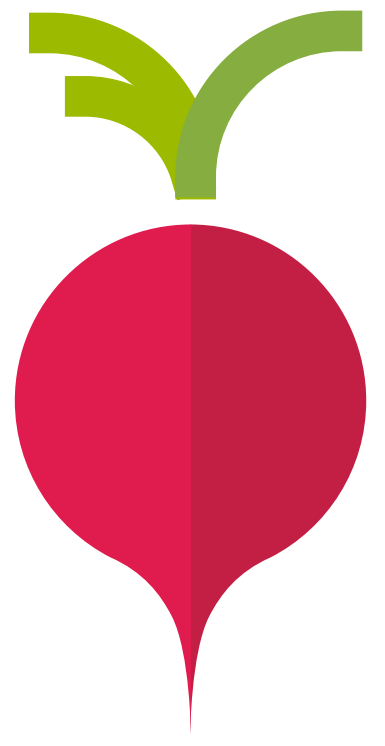
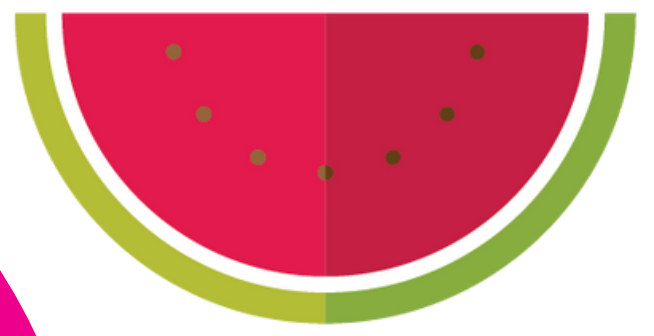




SPECIAL OLYMPICS NUTRITION GUIDELINES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities (ID), giving them continuing opportunities to improve physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, fellow Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

People with ID face significant challenges in accessing quality health care and obtaining opportunities that promote fitness and wellness, resulting in pronounced health disparities and reduced life expectancy. Special Olympics' health programming focuses on improving the physical and social-emotional well-being of people with IDD by increasing inclusion in healthcare, wellness and health systems for Special Olympics athletes and others with IDD. To this end, Special Olympics aspires to provide healthy programming and nutrition to improve the overall health and wellness of our Special Olympics athletes.






THESE NUTRITION GUIDELINES ARE DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THREE PRIMARY GOALS TO ENSURE THAT:

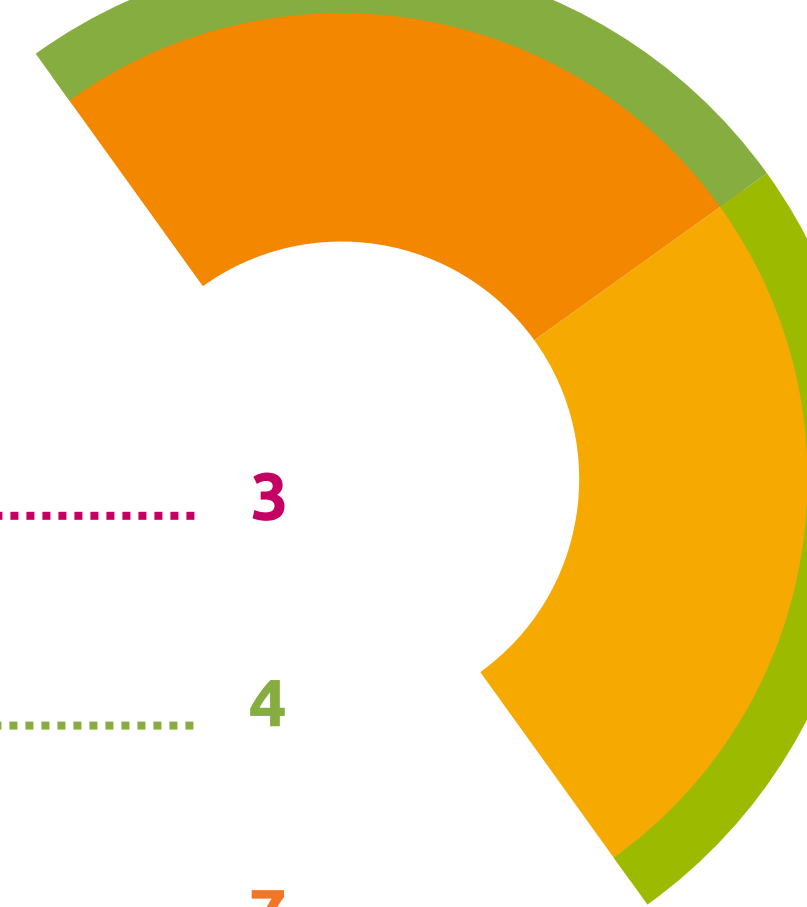
1. Healthy food and beverages are available for athletes, coaches, volunteers, staff, and guests.
2. Athletes receive healthy food and beverages to support their overall health and performance, on and off the field of play.
3. Athletes learn healthy eating habits as part of their Special Olympics experience.

These Nutrition Guidelines provide specific guidance and resources to staff procuring meals, snacks, and beverages provided at Special Olympics events. The intended audience is all Special Olympics staff involved in acquiring contracts, organizing, and/or sponsoring meals, snacks, and beverages at Special Olympics events. This may include food and beverages for athletes, volunteers, guests, and/or staff.

These guidelines and accompanying resources highlight best practices and the latest national and international standards for optimal nutrition and health to provide a healthy dietary framework for Special Olympics programming.

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Special Olympics aims to promote healthy living through nutrition education and demonstrating healthy behaviors while improving self-efficacy. People with intellectual disabilities are more likely to experience poor health outcomes, unmet healthcare needs, victimization, and early mortality. Based on the Special Olympics' Healthy Athletes screening events from 2007 through present, 55.3% are overweight or obese while 26% have low bone density, both of which can be improved by proper diet and nutrition.¹ Furthermore, in a recent survey of 402 Special Olympics athletes competing in the 2023 World Games, 33% reported on average eating one or less servings of fruit or vegetables per day.²

In addition to the food we eat, the beverages we consume are equally important. Frequent consumption of beverages that are high in sugar can be a risk factor for tooth decay and other dental complications. According to the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Screening events, around 36.2% of the ID population have untreated tooth decay.

EATING HEALTHY INCLUDES CONSUMING A BALANCED, NUTRIENT-RICH DIET.

What we eat and drink is directly connected to our mental health, how well we perform physically, whether we get sick, and how long we live. For athletes specifically, the goal is to consume nutrient rich foods that provide sustainable energy, enhance recovery times, promote endurance, and empower a lifestyle of overall wellness.³



FOOD AND BEVERAGE SPACES

The Special Olympics Nutrition Guidelines should be considered across all food and beverage spaces in your sports and competition venues, as described below:

VENUE	CLIENT GROUP
Field Of Play	Athletes and Coaches
Team Accommodation and Dining Areas	Athletes and Coaches
Competition Venue Athlete Lounges	Athletes and Coaches
Sport Technical Officials Lounges	Sport Technical Officials
Volunteer Lounge	Volunteers
Competition Venue Concessions	All clients
Workforce Dining Areas	Workforce including volunteers and staff
Welcome Center	Families, athletes, coaches, volunteers
Performance Stations*	Athletes

While these venues are the primary setting for these guidelines, it is recommended that they are also utilized at non-competition events and spaces which may include but are not limited to:

- Coach and volunteer trainings
- Athlete Leadership training and activations
- Healthy Athlete Screenings

Integrating these guidelines across all meetings, events, practice venues and programming will promote a culture emphasized on wellness, fitness performance, and healthy behaviors.

**Performance Stations are events held at, or near, the field of play at tournaments/ competitions or Games that are designed to educate and activate athletes and their supporters in the tenets of fitness: The SO Nutrition Guidelines should be reflected in all Nutrition and Hydration Stations.*



MEALS AND SNACKS

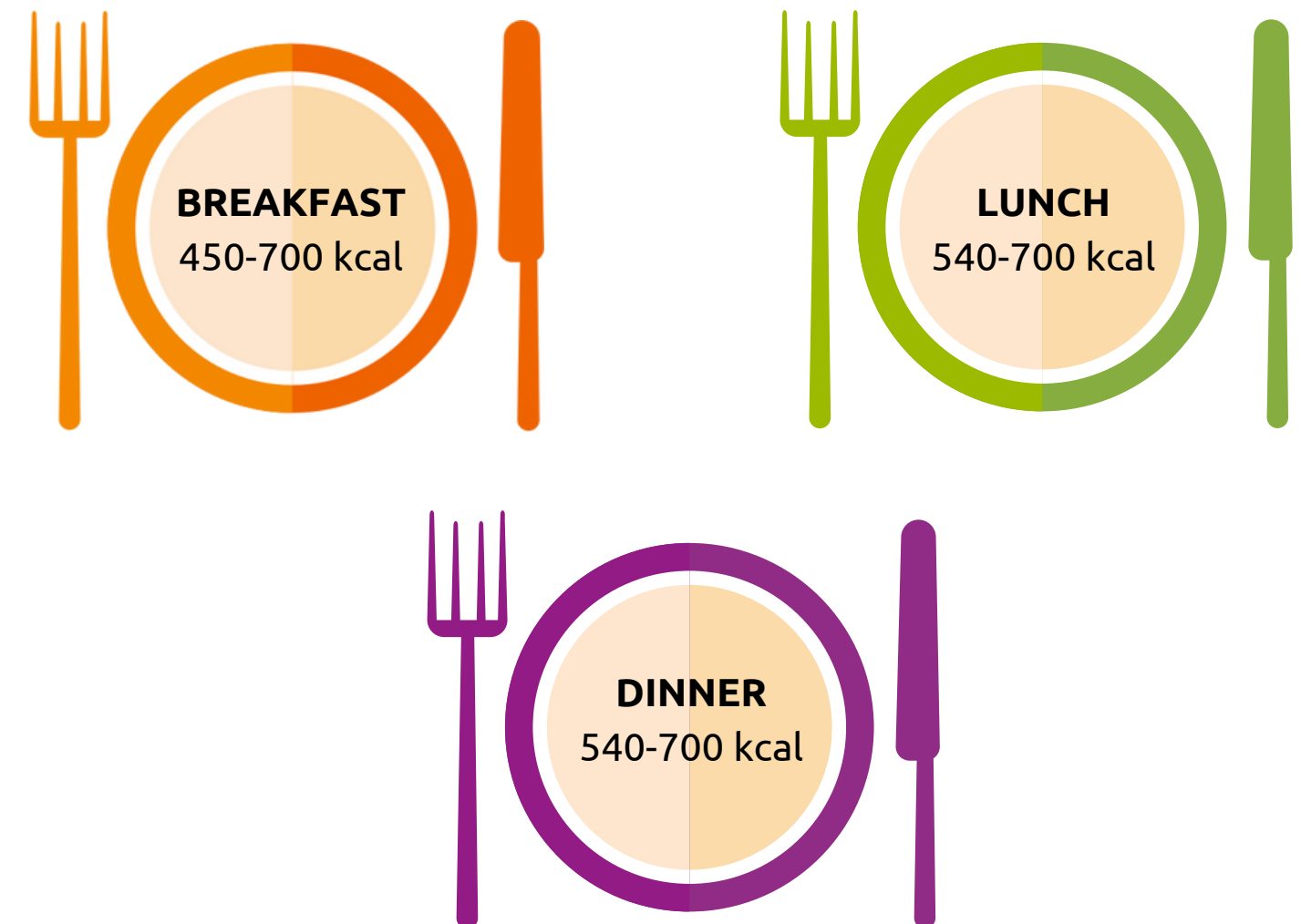


MEALS AND SNACKS

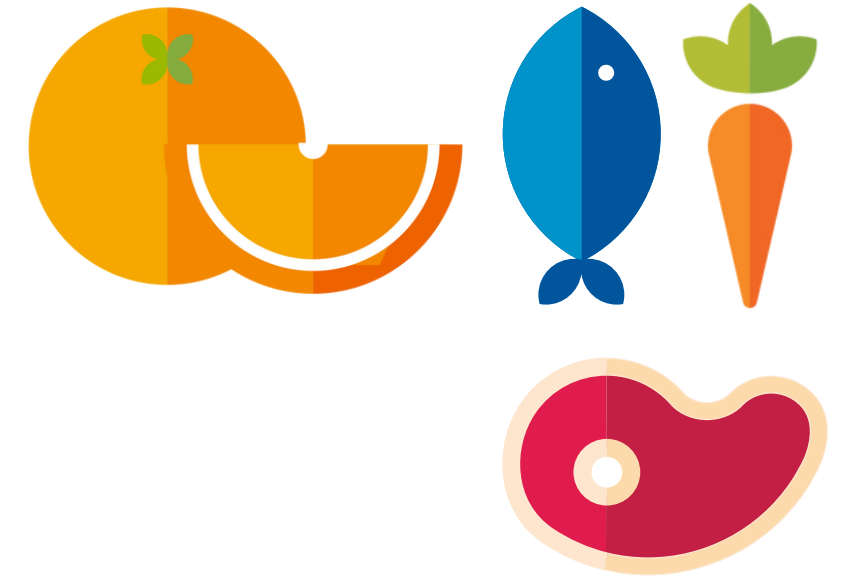
The ideal diet for all athletes, staff, and volunteers includes consuming a variety of well-balanced, nutrient-rich foods. Meals that contain a combination of carbohydrates, protein, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and fluids are ideal for optimal health and performance. All meals and snacks should be based on a variety of healthy food choices which meet the nutritional and cultural needs of all Special Olympics athletes.

MEALS SHOULD MEET THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Plant and animal protein options
- No more than 5g saturated fat
- Less than 0.5g Trans Fat
- No products containing partially hydrogenated oils
- Low-fat dairy products
- Low sodium options when available



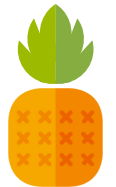
MEALS AND SNACKS



A HEALTHY DIET SHOULD INCLUDE FRUITS, VEGETABLES, LEGUMES, NUTS AND WHOLE GRAINS.



AT LEAST 400g (around 2 cups) of fruits and vegetables per day, excluding potatoes, sweet potatoes, cassava, and other starchy roots.⁴



LESS THAN 10% of total daily energy (caloric) intake from free sugars which is about 50g or 12 teaspoons, for someone consuming 2000 calories per day.^{4,5,6} For ideal health, consume less than 5% of total energy intake from free sugars. Free sugars, or added sugars, are added to foods or drinks by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, as well as sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates.⁶



LESS THAN 30% of total daily energy (caloric) intake from fats.^{4,7} Unsaturated fats, which are found in fish, avocados nuts, sunflower seeds, soybeans, canola and olive oils are preferable to saturated fats.



It is suggested that the intake of saturated fats be **LESS THAN 10%** of total energy (caloric) intake and trans-fats less than 1% of total energy (caloric) intake. Saturated fats are generally solid at room temperature and found in fatty meat, butter, cream, palm and coconut oil, cheese, ghee and lard. Trans-fats which are found in baked and fried foods, frozen pizza, pies, cookies, biscuits, wafers, and cooking oils and spreads along with ruminant trans-fats which are found in meat and dairy foods from ruminant animals, such as cows, sheep, goats and camels should all be consumed in small amounts. Industrially produced trans-fats are not part of a healthy diet and should be avoided.⁸



LESS THAN 10% (equivalent to about one teaspoon) per day or 2000mg of sodium.⁹ Salt should be iodized.

MEALS AND SNACKS

SNACKS SHOULD MEET THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES

CALORIES: 200 calories or less

SUGAR: ≤35% of weight from total sugars in foods

SODIUM: 200 mg of sodium or less

FAT: 35% of calories from total fat or less

SATURATED FAT: Less than 10% of calories from saturated fat
Trans Fat: Zero grams of trans fat

PREPACKAGED SNACKS SHOULD MEET THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES

- Have a whole grain as the first ingredient; or
- Have a fruit, vegetable, dairy product, or protein food as the first ingredient; or
- A combination of foods that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetables

Exceptions: reduced-fat cheese and part skim mozzarella; nuts, seeds and nut/seed butters; dried fruits with no added sugar (or only sweeteners required for processing and/or palatability); nut/seed/dried fruit combos with no added sugar or fats. These foods always meet the guidelines.

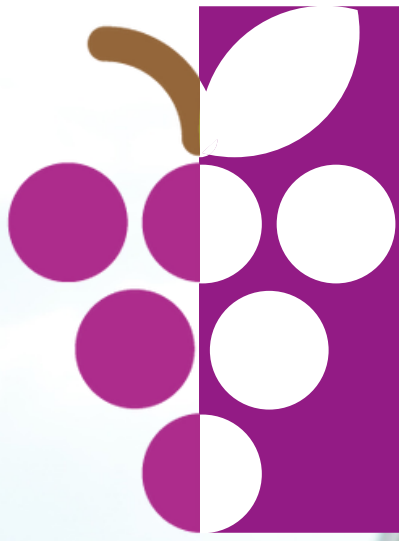
To see if a snack meets healthy snack guidelines:

<https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator/>

For snack and beverage suggestions:

<https://www.amazon.com/b?node=76712883011>





PLANNING



PLANNING AND PREPARATION

WHAT TYPES OF FOOD TO CHOOSE



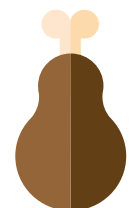
WHOLE GRAINS – bread, cereal, rice and pasta



WHOLE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



DAIRY – milk, yogurt and cheese



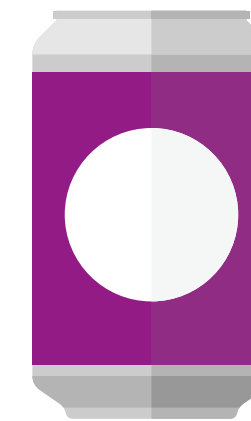
PROTEIN – meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts

CATERING CONSIDERATIONS

When planning plated meals or buffets at hotels, restaurants and conference centers, staff will need to customize the offerings, so be sure to plan far enough in advance. Let the catering manager and/or chef know you want to work together to create healthier meals. Some chefs are willing to get creative with new entrees that aren't on the menu if they have some guidance and enough lead time.



PLANNING AND PREPARATION



ITEMS TO AVOID

SODA WITH ADDED SUGAR: swap with 100% fruit juice or fruit infused water

CANDY OR SWEETS: swap with yogurt covered fruit or fresh fruit

FAST FOOD: swap with fresh foods; wraps, salads, vegetables, fruit, etc.

HIGH SODIUM ITEMS: swap with fresh foods, plant-based dips, or nut butters

BEVERAGES SHOULD MEET THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS

UNFLAVORED 1% or non-fat milk, or milk alternatives (e.g. soy or almond milk) suggest listing oat, pea or nut milks as healthier alternatives due to protein content.

100% juice with no added sweeteners, can be diluted with plain or carbonated water

PLAIN OR CARBONATED WATER

Low and/or no-calorie beverages (including sports drinks) with no more than **60 CALORIES** (about 5 minutes of running) per serving or container

Provide water and/or low or no fat milk for **ALL** meals, snacks and breaks.

TIMING OF MEALS



PRE-EXERCISE

- Pre-exercise fueling happens 1-4 hours before exercise
- Important for athletes performing at moderate to vigorous intensity
- Should be a small meal consisting mostly of carbohydrates and some protein



MID-EXERCISE

- Most athletes will not need refuel during a workout
- Mid-exercise refueling is beneficial for athletes who are exercising at a high intensity with limited breaks for over an hour
- Complex carbohydrates are recommended, such as fruit



POST-EXERCISE

- Should include protein and carbohydrates
- Post-exercise refueling should happen within one hour after the practice or competition ends
- Helps to replenish the storage of carbohydrates and aids in immediate muscle repair



SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS



SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

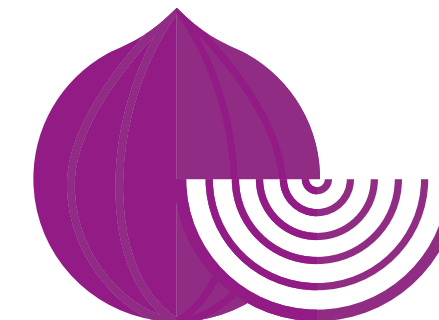
Many Special Olympics athletes have strict dietary requirements, hence considerable attention and resources must be focused on providing menus that are safe and appropriate to their cultural and dietary needs. The number of athletes with special dietary restrictions should be captured during registration.

When planning your event dietary requirements and special requests of each team must be collected via the registration form so an accurate estimation of numbers within each dietary category can be determined. These estimates should be further broken down by sport/venues for operational planning purposes.

EACH ALTERNATIVE DIET SHOULD BE CLEARLY LABELED PRIOR TO SERVING.



SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS



At a minimum, the following special dietary options should be provided:

GLUTEN-FREE: Free from the protein gluten found in a variety of grains. It is most important for people who have celiac disease, or a gluten allergy/gluten intolerance

DAIRY-FREE: Free of all dairy and lactose-containing foods

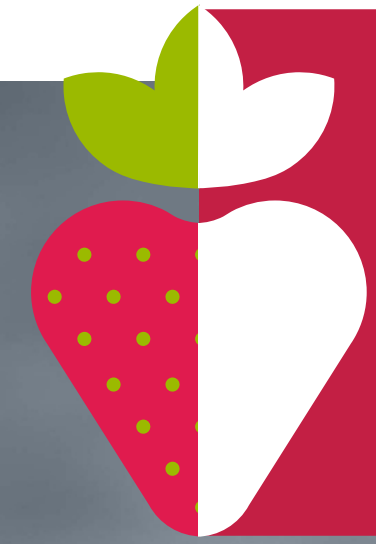
VEGETARIAN: Free of animal meat/meat products, including seafood. Eggs, cheese and dairy are usually okay. Plant based proteins are rich in nutrients and beneficial to a wide range of dietary needs. A vegetarian option should always be on hand

PESCATARIAN: A vegetarian who also eats seafood

HALAL: Halal foods adhere to the dietary standards in the Qur'an (the Muslim scripture). In some cases, people who follow religious diets such as Halal/Kosher can be accommodated by vegetarian diet

KOSHER: Kosher foods comply with strict dietary standards according to traditional Jewish law. In some cases, people who follow religious diets such as Halal/Kosher can be accommodated by vegetarian diet

NUT-FREE: Avoids all nuts, nut products and traces, including peanuts (also known as groundnuts), cashews, walnuts, pecans, almonds, Brazil nuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, pistachios and pine nuts



MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES THE EASY CHOICE



THE EASY CHOICE

Offering nutritious food and beverages isn't always enough to get people to make healthy choices. The environment foods are served in, how they are presented and what we see others do, have a big influence on the choices people make. These strategies can help athletes, coaches, volunteers, staff and others make the right choice for their health.

PROMOTE HEALTHIER CHOICES WHEN TRAVELING

- Remind your athletes and coaches to pack healthy snacks for the airplane, car ride, or just a busy day. This will help them avoid buying less healthy options when on-the-go and stay consistent with their food choices. Some snack ideas include whole grain granola bars, air-popped popcorn and packets of nuts.
- Provide a list of healthier restaurant options for out-of-town guests.

USE APPROPRIATELY SIZED SERVING WARE

- Use smaller plates, bowls and cups to promote healthy portion sizes.
- Use tongs and serving spoons that match appropriate serving sizes in all serving lines, including self-serve, and educate volunteers or catering staff on how to use them.



THE EASY CHOICE

INCORPORATE ENTHUSIASM AND POSITIVE MESSAGING

- Encourage Athlete Leaders, coaches, volunteers, staff and others to model healthy portions and food choices, and to eat the same food being offered to all participants.
- Ask volunteers, staff and coaches to drink only water when athletes are present.
- Incorporate small health tip reminders such as the benefits of different foods or the importance of good nutrition and hydration. See the Resources section of this guide for more.

USE LABELS, DISPLAYS, DECORATIONS AND SIGNAGE TO HIGHLIGHT HEALTHIER CHOICES

- Give healthier options catchy and appealing names, like “citrus burst water” or “green vitality smoothie”.
- Use color-coded signs to indicate healthier options as guidance on how to make healthy choices.
- Utilize visual resources like the [Fit 5 plate](#) to demonstrate how food should be served and portioned.

OFFER SMALLER PORTIONS SIZE OPTIONS

- Offer half-sandwiches or half-sized entrees.
- Offer bite sized versions of desserts, or other foods high in salt, saturated fat or added sugars.
- Offer smaller beverage sizes for beverages other than water.





GUIDANCE FOR LEADERSHIP



FOR LEADERSHIP



Special Olympics fully supports the adherence to these guidelines and strongly encourages all programs to adhere to them when planning sport events or offering food service. All programs should strive to provide meals or snacks that include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while reducing sodium, added sugars and saturated fats.

THE ORGANIZATION SHALL OFFER:

- At least 50% healthy beverage choices in all areas such as cafeterias, catered meetings, break rooms, snack bars and vending machines with a plan to eliminate sugary beverages.
- At least 25% of healthier food options available in cafeterias, catered meetings, break rooms, snack bars and vending machines with a plan to annually improve this percentage.
- Catered meals in cafeterias, on- or off-site meetings that align with the recommendations within this toolkit.
- Nutritional information and menu labeling (when available) on sodium, calories, and added sugars for foods and beverages sold in cafeterias, snack bars, vending machines, catered meals or other purchase points.

Special Olympics Programs that plan to adopt these guidelines are encouraged to take the pledge [HERE](#).

BY TAKING THE PLEDGE FOR THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS NUTRITION GUIDELINES

you are stepping into the role of a leader committed to providing healthy programming and nutrition to Special Olympics athletes at your events.



LETTER OF COMMITMENT

COMMITMENT TO A HEALTHY WORKFORCE/ENVIRONMENT EMAIL TEMPLATE

TO: All Staff/Guests/Members

FROM: [CEO OR OTHER SENIOR LEADER]

SUBJECT: Our Commitment to a Healthy Workforce or Environment

We value the health of our employees and guests and want to provide an environment in which everyone can thrive. We're committed to fostering a culture of health in our organization where healthy choices are easier. In the coming [WEEKS/MONTHS], we'll be making changes to foods and beverages offered in vending machines, cafeterias, meetings and events. With the guidance of the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention we've committed to several ambitious goals, including:

- Reducing sugary beverages.
- Reducing sodium, added sugars and saturated fat in the food and beverages provided.
- Providing more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and unsweetened beverages.
- Providing reasonable portion sizes. The recommended portion of any food or beverage depends on whether it's calorie-packed or not.
- Identifying and using food vendors who offer healthier choices.

Making these changes will take time and cooperation. Our aim is to create a healthier environment that gives employees, athletes and volunteers ample food and beverage choices that are enjoyable and health-promoting. We value your support and feedback during this transition process.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU

PARTNERSHIPS

Many Programs have found success building new or capitalizing on current partnerships to implement the Nutrition Guidelines. Partnerships may offer volunteers with health expertise, or value-in-kind food donations to provide healthy food options at minimal cost.

POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER SOURCES

- Local hospital systems
- Food Banks or Community Organizations
- Local Gyms and Fitness Professionals
- Grocery Stores, Restaurants or other food retailers

POSSIBLE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY DONORS

- Printing Company (resource and signage printing)
- Venue/Rental Company (serve ware rental)
- Local Superstore
- Local Grocery Store/Food Vendor



APPENDIX

PLANNING RESOURCES

- [Catered Meal Checklist](#)
- [Letter of Support Template](#)

POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER SOURCES

- [Fit 5 Guide](#)
- [Sports Nutrition eLearning](#)
- [Saturated and Trans Fats Tips Sheet](#)
- [WHO welcomes industry action to align with global trans fat elimination targets](#)
- [Added Sugar Tips](#)
- [Added Sugar Infographic - American Heart](#)
- [Added Salt Tips](#)
- [Added Salt Tips - CDC](#)
- [Added Salt Infographic - American Heart](#)
- [Definitions and Tips for Meeting Cultural and Dietary Needs](#)
- [Rethink Your Drink](#)
- [School of Strength](#)
- [Sweetened Beverages - CDC](#)

LETTER OF SUPPORT TEMPLATE

MEAL CHECK LIST AND LETTER OF SUPPORT

The branded Catered Meal Checklist and the Letter of Support Template can be found linked [here](#).

Catered Meal Checklist

Event: _____ Event Date: _____
Caterer: _____

Type of Meal: Breakfast Lunch Snack Dinner # of meals needed: _____
Special Requests or Considerations: _____

Menu Items:

Gluten-Free Option (Y/N): _____ #needed: _____
Vegetarian Option (Y/N): _____ #needed: _____
Vegan Option (Y/N): _____ # needed: _____
_____ Option (Y/N): _____ # needed: _____

Nutrition Standards Checklist:

The menu has one or more **fruit without added sugar** or **vegetables that are not fried.**
If grains are served, **at least half are whole grains**
If proteins are served, **lean/low-fat** and **vegetarian/plant-based** protein options are offered.
Any desserts offered are **low-sugar/low-calorie** (such as fresh fruit)
If dairy is served, **low-fat** or **non-fat** dairy options are available.
Yogurt has less than **10 grams of sugar** per serving.

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