To: Mayor and Members
Board of Health

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Re: Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide BOH07018 (City Wide)

Council Direction: Not applicable

Overview of Program Activities

On February 5, 2007, Health Minister Tony Clement launched the new 2007 version of Canada's Food Guide "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide". The new Food Guide was developed through widespread consultation with approximately 7,000 stakeholders including dietitians, scientists, physicians and public health personnel with an interest in health and chronic disease prevention.

In Ontario, Public Health Units are the primary vehicle for food guide distribution to the public. Health professionals, educators and others are being directed to obtain their copies from Public Health units. In Hamilton, local distribution is being coordinated through the Healthy Living Division Resource Centre, Family Health Division staff and the City Call Centre. Staff are distributing over 100,000 copies of the new guide initially. This includes distribution of 66,000 copies to schools, with a copy for each elementary school student, teacher and principal. The food guide will be further distributed to the public through the Ontario Early Year’s Centres, workplace wellness representatives, and through community events.

Staff will be actively updating and modifying all resources and teaching materials over the course of the next year, and mounting a series of in-service presentations to other health professionals to help them interpret the new guide.
New Features of this Food Guide:

- New name: Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide - commonly referred to as "Canada's Food Guide"
- Detailed information on the amount and types of food recommended for gender and age
- More clear guidance on portion sizes and number of recommended servings, particularly to address concerns about growing prevalence of obesity
- Stronger positioning of vegetables and fruit, highlighting their importance in health promotion and disease prevention
- Guidance on the kinds and amounts of oils and fats that will reduce intake of saturated and trans fats
- Enhanced promotion of frozen, canned and dried foods as nutritious options
- Pictorial representation of Canadian grown and produced (versus imported) foods
- Recommendation to consume "at least two servings of fish per week", along with an advisory about exposure to mercury
- Recommendations to take nutrient supplements: a Vitamin D supplement for Canadians over the age of 50, folic acid for women perinatally, and iron for women prenatally
- The addition of recommendations for younger children (under 2 years of age)
- Statements to limit foods that are high in calories, fat, sugar and salt, along with an example of a Nutrition Facts food label
- Greater emphasis on the importance of combining regular physical activity with healthy eating

The new food guide comes with an interactive internet component which allows users to personalize information according to age, gender and food preferences. In addition, by spring 2007 the guide will be available in several different languages. Cultural adaptations are underway, beginning with a guide tailored for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.

Additional information on CFG is available at Health Canada's web site [http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide)

**Mandate/standards**

The food guide is the cornerstone document of all Public Health Nutrition education and policy development. It is referenced in almost every healthy eating message.

**Resources**

Costs include a $3,000 expense to deliver guides to schools and other community partners. In addition, various staff will be spending several hours over the spring providing in-servicing. Copies of the Canada Food Guide are provided to Public Health Services by Health Canada at no charge.
Impact on the Health of Hamiltonians

There is great potential for renewed interest in nutrition, stimulated by the new food guide, to translate into healthier eating habits among Hamiltonians. Healthy eating is associated with lower risk for chronic disease and improved growth and development.

Comparison to Peer Communities

Hamilton proactively distributed 70,000 copies of the guide to all elementary schools as soon as the guides arrived, where other health units are using a fax back order form for interested teachers and schools. This process worked well in the region during the last distribution in 1992 and is more efficient by eliminating requests through ongoing phone calls.

Emerging Issues/Opportunities

Release of a new food guide intensifies interest in nutrition, thus increasing requests from the public for public health nutrition information. New guidelines create an opportunity for Public Health Services to promote its services in the community and to encourage Hamiltonians to choose healthy food.

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