

Donating Healthy and Safe Food

Everyone has the right to access healthy and safe food.

Read on for information about how to choose nutritious and safe food.



Choose healthy food

When shopping for food to donate, try using the % Daily Value (% DV) found on the Nutrition Facts Table to compare the nutrients in packaged and canned products. 5% DV or less is considered “a little” and 15% DV or more is considered “a lot.”

- Look for products that are lower in sugar, sodium and saturated fat.
- Check out the [Better Foods to Buy List](#) for help in choosing healthier food and beverages at the grocery store.

Vegetables and fruits

- canned vegetables, tomato products and soup with no added salt or the lowest sodium content
- canned fruit packed in water or fruit juice, rather than syrup
- whole fruit instead of juice, fruit beverages, drinks or cocktails
- unsweetened apple sauce
- plain, unsweetened dried fruit such as raisins, apricots etc. instead of fruit leathers and “fruit” candies

Whole grain foods

Products should have the words “whole grain” as the first ingredient in the list (for example, “whole grain whole wheat” and “whole oats,” have at least 2 grams of fibre, less than 2 grams of saturated fat and less than 240 mg of sodium per serving.

- whole grain bread products (such as bread, bagels, English muffins, tortillas, pitas and buns)
- whole grain hot and cold cereals that have at least 4 grams of fibre and 8 grams or less of sugar per 30 gram serving
- whole grain crackers

- granola bars with whole grain as the first ingredient and have less than 8 grams of sugar per 30 gram bar
- plain brown rice, whole grain pasta, bulgur, buckwheat, millet and barley

Protein foods

- evaporated milk
- dry milk powder (this can be added to foods to increase the amount of calcium, vitamin D and protein)
- lower sodium canned meat and fish products; look for fish canned in water
- dried or canned beans, lentils and chickpeas with little or no added sodium
- dry roasted nuts and seeds, without any added salt or sugar
- peanut butter and other butters made from nuts, seeds or legumes

Many food banks appreciate financial donations. Donated money can be used to buy perishable foods such as vegetables, fruits, milk, soy beverage, yogurt and cheese.

Choose safe food

Food banks must follow food safety legislation and cannot accept the following food products:

- food with missing identifying labels
- severely dented cans
- foods damaged in floods or fires
- food that has been partially consumed or has signs of spoilage or contamination
- home canned food products (because of the risk of botulism from improper processing)
- wild game or uninspected meat
- unpasteurized milk products and juices
- food prepared at home or in uninspected kitchens
- food products with expiry dates that have passed

Note: Food with a date past the best before date can be donated as long as there are no signs of spoilage.

Nutritious foods that have been prepared or cooked in an inspected food business can be donated to community food programs as long as the food can meet these conditions:

- has not been partially consumed
- is in food grade packaging
- is clearly identified with labels and ingredients
- has not been contaminated
- does not show signs of thawing
- has not been previously reheated
- has been stored in either a refrigerator at 4°C or lower or frozen at -18°C
- is cooked food that is maintained hot at 60°C or higher until served



Household food insecurity means not having enough money to buy healthy food.¹ Living with food insecurity means not getting enough of the vitamins, minerals and food energy needed for health. Adults living with food insecurity consume poorer quality diets, including fewer vegetables and fruit.²

People who cannot afford healthy food are more likely to become ill and need more health services.³ Donating safe and healthy food can meet an immediate need but it does not impact food insecurity. The solutions to food insecurity include:

- enough income
- access to affordable housing, daycare and transportation
- opportunities for safe and consistent work
- opportunities for an education⁴

For more information see the [Health Unit's information sheet](#) on food insecurity in Waterloo Region. Share the information with others.



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¹ PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. Home Page. <http://proof.utoronto.ca/> Accessed 3 July 2018

² Kirkpatrick, S.I. & Tarasuk V. Food insecurity is associated with nutrient inadequacies among Canadian adults and adolescents. *The Journal of Nutrition*; 138: 604–612, 2008. accessed 3 July 2018

³ PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research. *The Impact of Food Insecurity on Health*. Accessed 3 July 2018

⁴ Public Health Agency of Canada. 2013. *What Makes Canadians Healthy or Unhealthy?* Accessed 3 July 2018

Adapted with permission from the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.