



The Cost of Healthy Meals and Snacks for Children and Youth in Saskatchewan 2015

Foods and beverages served in child care settings, schools and community programs can impact children's health and well-being. The cost of foods, as well as available program funding and budgets, impact the type of foods and beverages served. This resource shows the average cost of healthy meals and snacks for children and youth in Northern and Southern Saskatchewan. Details can be found on page 3. Using these average costs can help child care facilities, schools, and community organizations budget for child nutrition programs. Planning for the cost of healthy food helps to ensure quality food is available in meal and snack programs.

Why are healthy foods and beverages important?

Children and youth need to eat healthy foods and drink healthy beverages to support proper growth and development. Healthy eating patterns in childhood also support intellectual development and may prevent long-term health problems (1, 2). Children, youth and adults will choose healthy foods regularly when exposure to these foods begins early in life (3).

Research has consistently shown that nutrition programs that offer healthy foods and beverages can influence the health and educational outcomes of children and youth (4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

Children who eat enough healthy foods:

- have better attendance in school (4, 9)
- do better at math, science and English (4, 10, 11)
- are more alert, have improved memory (4, 6)
- behave better (11, 12)
- have improved mood and mental well-being (13)

Provincial guidelines have been developed to guide the types of foods and beverages served in child care facilities and schools to benefit the well-being of children.

Communication with and involvement of staff, parents, children, and administrators is important in order for a nutrition policy and administrative procedure to be accepted and followed (14).

For more information related to the nutrition guidelines in child care settings refer to the Saskatchewan Child Care Licensee Manual at www.saskatchewan.ca. For more information about school nutrition guidelines, refer to Nourishing Minds and Healthy Foods for my School found at www.saskatchewan.ca.

Resource developed by the following Registered Dietitians:

- Audrey Boyer, Keewatin Yatthe & Mamawetan Churchill River Health Regions and Athabasca Health Authority
- Chelsea Brown, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region
- Danielle Campbell, Saskatoon Health Region
- Heather Carnegie, Food For Thought Project, Prince Albert Parkland Health Region, Prince Albert Catholic School Division and Saskatchewan Rivers School Division
- Barb Wright, Sun Country Health Region

How were food costs determined?

To assess the cost of healthy foods and beverages being served in Saskatchewan for nutrition programs, sample one week menus for breakfast, lunch and snacks were created based on Canada's Food Guide (15).

- Breakfasts include one Food Guide Serving from Vegetables and Fruit plus a serving from two other food groups.
- Lunches include one Food Guide Serving from all four food groups.
- Snacks include one Food Guide Serving from Vegetables and Fruit and a serving from one other food group.

- Costs of menu items were based on Saskatchewan food costing data collected in June 2015. This data and the collection methodology are available in *The Cost of Healthy Eating in Saskatchewan 2015* (17).

Using the Consumer Price Index, the price of food purchased from Saskatchewan stores rose 15.8% from June 2015 to January 2016, indicating the current cost of food may be higher than shown in this report (18).

Things to consider when looking at food costs

The types of foods and beverages available in meal and snack programs are influenced by many factors. When referring to this resource, consider the following:

- For example, often meal and snack programs operate in schools and facilities that were not originally planned to provide these services. As such, proper space for food storage and preparation may be lacking and limit the type of foods available to children and youth (16).
- The foods and beverages selected for the menus did not include pre-packaged convenience foods, condiments or seasonings. If these items were included, the costs would be higher.
- Prices were based on average package sizes found in most grocery stores. Some savings may be realized by purchasing in bulk, through a food service distributor or grocery wholesale company.

- Costs noted in the resource are for foods and beverages only. Additional costs for meal and snack programs such as storage equipment and serving supplies, as well as staff and volunteer time, were not included in the food costs.
- When serving mostly younger children such as infants and preschoolers, food costs may be lower since these children will likely eat less than 1 Food Guide Serving. Saskatchewan child care menu planning guidelines recommend 1/2 to 1 Food Guide Serving be offered at each meal or snack so that children have the opportunity to eat enough food. Young children have small stomachs and tend to eat smaller amounts of foods than older children and adults.

*By nourishing our children's health and minds,
together we can build a brighter future for Saskatchewan.*

Cost of Healthy Meals and Snacks in Saskatchewan

Cost of sample breakfast, lunch and snack in Northern Saskatchewan 2015

* Geographical Area	Sample Breakfast Cost/Child/Day	Sample Lunch Cost/Child/Day	Sample Snack Cost/Child/Day
Northern Saskatchewan - Far North	\$2.56	\$3.83	\$2.20
Northern Saskatchewan – North West	\$1.53	\$2.55	\$1.49
** Northern Saskatchewan – North East	\$1.88	\$2.88	\$1.76
Northern Saskatchewan – North Town	\$1.41	2.18	\$1.29
Northern Saskatchewan - Average	\$1.71	\$2.69	\$1.61
Total Saskatchewan Average	\$1.32	\$2.09	\$1.22

* Geographical areas

- Northern Saskatchewan: Communities farther than 100 km north of Prince Albert.
- Far North: low access communities with seasonal roads. Air travel is main access to community.
- North West: moderately accessible communities with gravel or paved road and some air access
- North East: moderately accessible communities with gravel roads and some air access.
- Northern Town: highly accessible communities with paved roads and air access in all seasons.

** North East costs should be interpreted with caution since some stores in that geographical area could not be accessed due to forest fire evacuations.

Cost of sample breakfast, lunch and snack in Southern Saskatchewan 2015

*Geographical Area	Sample Breakfast Cost/Child/Day	Sample Lunch Cost/Child/Day	Sample Snack Cost/Child/Day
Southern Saskatchewan – Rural	\$1.37	\$2.13	\$1.16
Southern Saskatchewan – Town	\$1.30	\$2.08	\$1.17
Southern Saskatchewan – Small City	\$1.16	\$1.87	\$1.09
Southern Saskatchewan – Large City	\$1.12	\$1.78	\$1.05
Southern Saskatchewan - Average	\$1.24	\$1.97	\$1.14
Total Saskatchewan Average	\$1.32	\$2.09	\$1.22

* Geographical areas

- Southern Saskatchewan: Communities including and surrounding Prince Albert and south.
- Rural: population less than 500 people
- Town: population between 500-4999 people
- Small City: population between 5000 – 99 999 people
- Large City: population of 100 000 or more people

EXAMPLE:

Imagine that there are 15 children participating in a nutrition program in Southern Saskatchewan which runs 114 days a year. The table above shows that an average breakfast in Southern Saskatchewan costs \$1.24 per child/day. To calculate the food budget use the following calculation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \$1.24 \text{ per child/day} \times 15 \text{ children} = \$18.60 \text{ per day} \\
 & 114 \text{ days the program runs} \times \$18.60 \text{ per day} = \\
 & \quad \underline{\$2,120.40} \text{ for the year for breakfasts}
 \end{aligned}$$

Resources

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