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## Make the healthy food choice the easy choice at play and at school

Children and youth spend hours at school, recreation centres, sports fields and arenas. These spaces play an important role in their nutrition and health so it's important to think about the food and beverages available there.

'Everyday foods', the healthiest choices, include plain water, vegetables, fruit, whole grains, milk, meat and alternatives like fortified soy beverages, legumes, nuts and eggs. 'Sometimes foods' are great to enjoy at special family occasions. Keep reading for ideas that could help make the healthy food choice the easy choice at play and at school.

Community and school vending machines offering only 'sometimes foods' like chips, chocolates and pop make it tough to make a wise choice when children and youth are hungry or thirsty. Decision makers can meet with vendors and food wholesalers to find nutritious, safe and affordable products. Operators can ensure adequate water fountains.

Sports events that wrap up with cookies and fruit punch make it difficult to learn the lesson that healthy foods lead to healthy bodies and minds. When pressed for time it is easier to pick up prepared foods, often higher in added sugars, salt and fat. Try sharing the load when planning for healthy snacks at community or school-based sporting events.

"Communities, families, health care providers and schools can work together to make everyday food choices outside the home the normal way to go", says Marie Traynor, Public Health Nutritionist. "We can role model healthy eating and work towards creating environments and places that support it."

For more information contact the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit's Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 (613-345-5685) or visit our website at [www.healthunit.org/nutrition](http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition)

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