



NUTRITION IN THE *School Years*

It's time to act! Nutrition matters, yet many kids in Canada aren't getting the nutrition they need.

STARTLING STATS

- Iron, zinc and vitamin B₁₂ are common nutrient shortfalls among kids in Canada.
- The majority of adolescents consume lower than recommended intakes of vegetables & fruit, milk & alternatives, and meat & alternatives.

A study of 9-18 year olds found a 3:1 ratio of animal to plant protein is associated with better diet quality.

- Adolescent girls had inadequate intakes for most nutrients studied.
- For small appetites, protein density matters. Meat, fish and poultry give you more protein per bite than other protein sources.

About 1 in 4 teen girls and 1 in 10 kids are low in iron.

- Eating red meat is associated with higher vegetable intakes and better nutrient adequacy.

57% of teens' calories come from highly processed foods.

BACKGROUND

1. Childhood is a period of rapid growth and development making nutrition especially important during this time period.
2. Nutrition during childhood can have a lasting impact on physical and cognitive development and future health, yet, in Canada, children and teens often don't get enough of some of the essential nutrients they require, like iron and zinc, while far too many of their daily calories come from highly processed foods.
3. Iron deficiency impacts about 1 in 4 teen girls and 1 in 10 kids—affecting mood, energy, and learning.
4. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society “Iron deficiency can cause delayed cognitive and physical development, poor acquisition of language and learning skills, and increases risk of infection in children and adolescents”.
5. The lunch meal is an opportune time to improve nutrient intakes. Many parents (rightly) focus on fruit and veggies, but protein and iron foods should also be prioritized to address these nutrients gaps.
6. Both plant and animal proteins have a role, and each contain different and complementary nutrients. Animal-sourced foods, in particular red meats like beef, contain essential nutrients many school-aged children in Canada lack - in forms that are easiest for the human body to absorb, and often difficult to get, or absent from plant-based sources.
7. Offering a variety of both plant and animal sourced foods is the best strategy to ensure your child is meeting their nutrient needs.

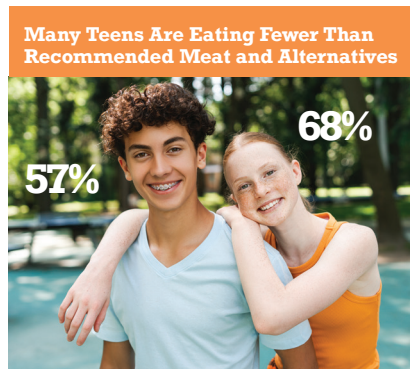
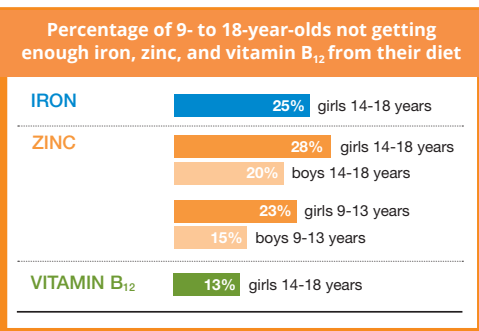


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PERSPECTIVES ON PROTEIN SOURCES

- **Protein Quantity:** Meat, fish and poultry contain more protein per serving compared to other protein foods like eggs, dairy foods like milk, yogurt, or cheese, and many plant-based protein foods like beans or peas.
- **Protein Quality:** Complete proteins in animal foods provide all the essential amino acids (EAAs) for healthy childhood development, while most plant proteins are low in one or more EAAs and are considered incomplete.
- Research looking at Canadian children 9-18 found that a diet with a **3:1 ratio of animal to plant protein provides an optimal balance** to support overall nutrient adequacy.
- **Iron from heme iron sources is the most absorbable.** Heme iron is only found in meat, fish and poultry. Other sources of iron, like plant foods and eggs contain non-heme iron, a form of iron that is less well absorbed.
- The move toward more plant-based eating may be making it **harder for some kids to get enough iron.**

ARTWORK



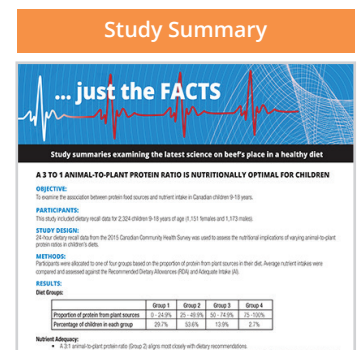
AMOUNT OF PROTEIN IN COMMON FOODS
Based on Health Canada's standard serving sizes, Canadian Nutrient File, 2015.

More than 20 g	10 g to 20 g	Less than 10 g
(100 g for each) Beef Pork Lamb Veal Goat Chicken and turkey Fish and seafood	Canned fish (55 g) Eggs (2) Tempeh (85 g) Deli meats (55 g) Cottage cheese (125 g) Greek yogurt (115 g) Edamame (125 mL) Hemp seeds (30 g)	Cheese (30 g) Plain yogurt (115 g) Milk or soy milk (250 mL) Nuts and seeds (30 g) Nut butters (15 g) Tofu (85 g) Beans and lentils (125 mL) Hummus (15 mL)



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