

# INGREDIENTS TO AVOID SERVING AT BREAKFAST



Since the foods provided at school can impact the overall quality of students' diets, it is important to always provide nutritious food choices. Below are five examples of ingredients that may cause harm to consumers, and can easily be replaced by ingredients that have nutritional benefits.

## ADDED SUGAR AND SWEETENERS

Sugary breakfast cereals, chocolate milk, granola bars, flavoured yogurt and syrup might be requested by students at the breakfast club. Unfortunately, all of this added sugar in our diets can have negative effects on our health. Obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay may be the obvious effects, but there can be secondary effects as well. Eating too many sugary foods leaves less room for more healthful choices that can provide vitamins and minerals that the body needs.

Are artificial sweeteners better? Despite being calorie free, studies show a strong correlation with obesity and other related diseases. Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and sucralose have been linked to behavioural problems, hyperactivity, and allergies. For some sensitive individuals, artificial sweeteners act as a nervous system irritant adversely affecting mood and energy.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Use natural sweeteners such as honey, maple syrup or molasses;
- Serve fresh, whole foods instead of packaged foods;
- Look for foods that have sugar as the third ingredient or lower;
- Stay away from foods that say "low calorie" or "diet".

## HYDROGENATED FATS (OR TRANS FATS)

Due to the many negative health effects associated with hydrogenated fats, foods containing them should not be served at the breakfast club. Hydrogenated fats are created when a liquid vegetable oil is turned into a solid through the hydrogenation process. During this process, a nasty by-product called trans fats is created. Foods contain trans fats in order to increase their shelf life and make foods more palatable. Unfortunately, there are a number of downsides to trans fats in food. Because the fats have been altered, the body metabolizes them much more slowly. This increases the low density lipoproteins (the bad ones) which keep excess cholesterol circulating in our blood. Trans fats can also negatively impact our bodies' immunity, increase inflammation, and they have been linked to an increased risk of heart disease.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Avoid foods that contain hydrogenated oil, partially hydrogenated oil, modified oil or shortening. Examples include: margarine, chips, deep fried foods, baked goods, crackers and cookies.
- Choose nut butters that only contain nuts. Mainstream nut butters and cocoa spreads that have more than one ingredient typically have modified oils and a lot of added sugar.

## ENRICHED WHEAT FLOUR

Although enriched wheat sounds like it would be nutritious, it is essentially white flour. When wheat is refined into white flour, the bran and germ are removed. By law, four of the vitamins and one mineral that have been depleted during processing must be added back in to “enrich” the flour: thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid and iron. Even though nutrients have been added back in, many others have been depleted during processing. Enriched wheat flour is not a whole grain. It lacks the fibre which is needed for a healthy digestive system, elimination, improving immunity, lowering cholesterol, and balancing blood sugar levels.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Beware of “grain” bread that still has enriched wheat flour as the first or most predominate ingredient;
- Look for whole wheat, whole grain or sprouted grain in the ingredients as the first ingredient;
- Ensure at least 2 grams of fibre per serving of grain product.

## ARTIFICIAL FLAVOURS

Artificial flavours represent the largest number of food additives – the majority of which humans don’t need. Most products that contain artificial flavours are highly processed, highly refined, and best limited to an occasional treat.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Beware of the words “natural” and “natural flavouring”. The term “natural” is misleading as it designates something derived from nature that may not necessarily be natural. The word natural may seem safe, but when it comes to flavourings, artificial or natural flavourings are all chemicals that can affect our health. Obtaining something from a natural source isn’t the same thing as using something in its natural state.

## ARTIFICIAL COLOURS

Artificial colours are chemicals manufactured from petroleum and coal-tar products. Many of these chemicals have been incorporated into foods with little research as to their safety. Some have been withdrawn because of studies showing toxicity or carcinogenicity. There are many major concerns with coloured foods, including potential toxicity, allergic reactions, liver stress from metabolizing these chemicals, potential carcinogenicity, and possible behavioural problems in children.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Avoid coloured foods, including coloured drinks, candies, cereals, cookies and cakes with colourful toppings.
- Look for foods that are coloured naturally with beta-carotene, annatto, powdered beets, saffron, turmeric, paprika, grapes, vegetable and fruit juices.