



SWAP

SUPPORTING • WELLNESS • AT • PANTRIES

Food Bank & Pantry Guide to SWAP

Revised: 2020

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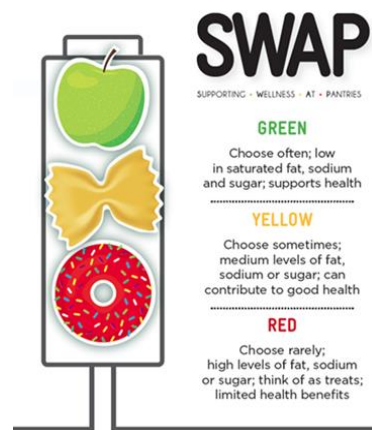
FOODSHARE

Institute of Hunger Research & Solutions

This project was supported by Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

**Healthy
Eating
Research**

Using the SWAP System (Supporting Wellness at Pantries)



SWAP is a stoplight nutrition system designed to help promote healthy food choices at food banks and food pantries. SWAP ranks food based on levels of saturated fat, sodium and sugars because these nutrients are linked with increased risk of chronic diseases. By ranking food nutritionally, food banks and food pantries can talk with food donors about donating healthier food, and can promote nutritious food for guests who visit food pantries.

SWAP is a program of the Institute for Hunger Research & Solutions at Connecticut Food Bank/Foodshare, the food bank serving Connecticut. The Institute created a Toolkit with background information and tips for implementing SWAP in a food bank or food pantry. Visit the Toolkit at: <http://site.foodshare.org/swaptoolkit>

SWAP was revised in 2020 to align with the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. The HER Nutrition Guidelines were developed by an expert panel convened by HER and were adopted by Feeding America. For more details, see the full report at: <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>

Promotional Food Bank video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKjS4GUXEus>
Food Pantry Training video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsRWH2RAVCs>

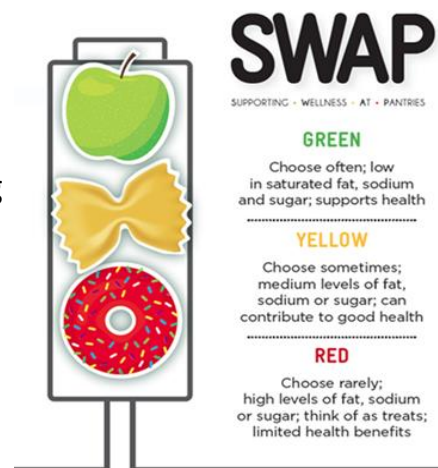
For more information and if you want to implement SWAP in your food bank or food pantry, contact Katie Martin at kmartin@Foodshare.org

Revisions to SWAP in 2020:

Alignment with the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System

In March 2020, Feeding America adopted the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System developed by an expert panel convened by HER. SWAP has been revised to align with the new [HER Nutrition Guidelines](#). Many of the revisions help to streamline nutrient levels and not require checking nutrient levels for certain food categories such as desserts and condiments.

This should make it easier to use the SWAP system. Hopefully, the guidelines and accompanying SWAP tools will help create one national nutrition standard for charitable food programs.



The major changes to SWAP include:

- Changes to some of the food categories
 - Fruits and Vegetables are combined into one category
 - Animal and plant-based proteins are combined into one protein category
 - Addition of non-dairy alternatives like soy milk
- All desserts are ranked Red
- Condiments and Cooking Staples are Not Ranked
- Snacks cannot be ranked Green, and grain-based snacks like crackers need to have first ingredient as whole grain to be ranked Yellow
- Nutrient ranks are based on Added Sugars
 - For Fruits and Vegetables and Dairy, when added sugars are not listed on the nutrition facts label, levels are indicated for total sugars
- The nutrient levels have been adjusted to be more similar between food categories, for example using 230 mg of sodium for most Green items and 480 mg of sodium for most Red items. This should make it easier to remember the levels.

HOW TO RANK FOODS USING SWAP

into Green, Yellow, Red or Not Ranked



STEP 1

- Determine what food group the item is in:
Fruits & Vegetables, Grains, Protein, Dairy, Non-Dairy Alternatives (e.g. soy milk), Beverages, Mixed Dishes (e.g. soup), Snacks
- If you don't know which food group to use, check the alphabetic list of food items.
- Desserts are all ranked Red automatically and you don't have to check the nutrient levels.
- Condiments (e.g. sauces), cooking staples, and baby food are Not Ranked so you don't need to check the nutrient levels.

STEP 2

- Look at the Nutrition Facts label of the food and compare Saturated Fat, Sodium and Sugar values on the label to the SWAP Nutrition Guide. Use Added Sugars when available, or else use Total Sugars.

STEP 3

- Determine which color the Saturated Fat falls in.
- Determine which color the Sodium falls in.
- Determine which color the Added Sugars falls in.
For Fruits, Vegetables and Dairy, if Added Sugars is not available, use the Total Sugars amount listed on the guide.



STEP 4

- If all nutrient levels fall within one color, then the food is categorized by that color.
- If the nutrient levels fall within multiple colors, categorize the food by the least encouraged color, either Yellow or Red.
- **For example:** If saturated fat and sugar both fall in the Green category, but the sodium falls in Yellow, then the food is categorized in Yellow.
- **Exceptions:** For Grains, in order to be Green, the first ingredient must be a “whole grain”. All 100% fruit juice is a Yellow. If a Snack is grain-based like crackers, the first ingredient must be a “whole grain” to be considered Yellow. All desserts are ranked Red. All condiments, cooking staples, and baby food are Not Ranked.

STEP 5:

For food banks: Rank the food item in your inventory system as Green, Yellow, Red or Not Ranked.
For food pantries: Place the food items on the appropriately colored shelf with SWAP signs for Choose Often, Sometimes or Rarely.

Simple Rules of Thumb for SWAP

Food that is Green

- All fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole eggs
- Whole grain bread, pasta, tortillas
- Brown rice
- Skim, 1% and 2% milk
- Plain water, coffee, tea

Food that is Yellow

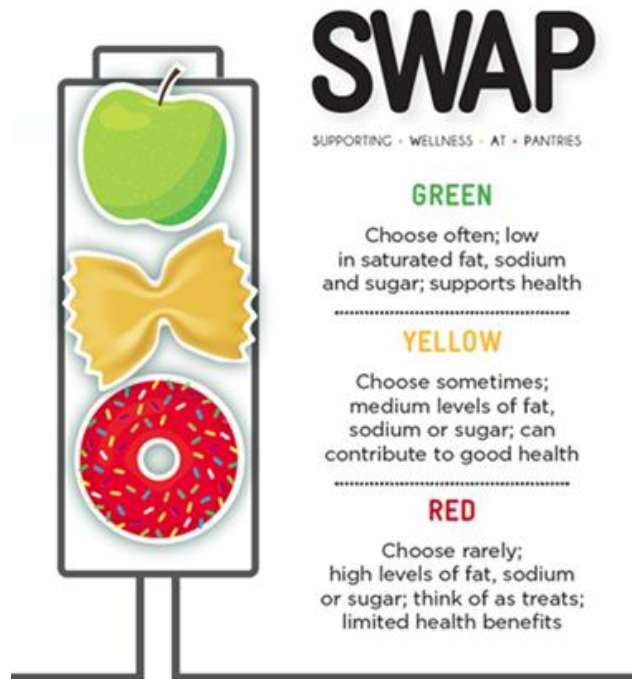
- 100% fruit juice
- Regular “white” bread, pasta, tortillas
- White rice
- Whole milk
- Most peanut butter
- Plain dried fruit such as raisins

Food that is Red

- Desserts such as ice cream, cookies, cake
- Candy
- Most processed / packaged snacks
- Regular soda and juice drinks

Food that is NOT ranked with SWAP

- Condiments like salad dressings and sauces
- Cooking Staples such as flour, sugar, oil, spices
- Baby food
- Nutrient supplements such as Ensure or protein powders



Checking whether Grains are “Whole Grains”

When using SWAP to rank Grains such as bread, cereal, and rice, or for grain-based snacks, you need to check the first ingredient on the label to see if it is a whole grain.

We know this can be confusing. To help, see the list below for words that indicate that it is whole grain.

Words you may see on packages that indicate a Whole Grain

- whole grain [Barley, Buckwheat, Bulgur, Corn, Farro, Oats, Rye, Sorghum]
- whole wheat
- whole [Barley, Buckwheat, Bulgur, Corn, Farro, Oats, Rye, Sorghum]
- stoneground whole [Barley, Buckwheat, Bulgur, Corn, Farro, Oats, Rye, Sorghum, Wheat]
- Brown rice
- Quinoa
- Oats, oatmeal (including old-fashioned oatmeal, instant oatmeal)

For more information about whole grains, check out:

<https://wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101/identifying-whole-grain-products>



Understanding Added Sugars When Using SWAP

As part of a healthy diet, it is recommended to consume foods with low levels of added sugars. The new USDA Nutrition Facts Label now includes added sugars to help consumers make informed decisions to reduce sugar intake.

To determine the SWAP ranking of a specific food or beverage item, added sugars are considered. However, for the Fruits and Vegetables and Dairy categories, when added sugars are not listed on the Nutrition Facts Label, levels are indicated for total sugars.

A Closer Look at Total Sugars and Added Sugars:

Total Sugars

Total sugars include both natural sugars and added sugars found in foods and beverages. Natural sugars include fructose and lactose, and are found in foods like fruit, dairy, and vegetables.

For the Fruits and Vegetables and Dairy categories, to be ranked Green, they must have 0 grams of added sugars. If only total sugars are listed on the label, the Total Sugars thresholds are:

- ≤ 12 grams for the Green “Choose Often” tier
- 13 to 23 grams for the Yellow “Choose Sometimes” tier
- ≥ 24 grams for the Red “Choose Rarely” tier

Added Sugars

Added sugars do not occur naturally and are added to processed foods and beverages during processing.

The amount of added sugars can now be found on the Nutrition Label. They are also listed in the ingredients under the following names: dextrose, maltose, sucrose, high fructose corn syrup, molasses, cane sugar, and corn sweetener.

Common foods that contain added sugars include: sugar sweetened beverages (i.e. regular soda, concentrated fruit juice, energy drinks), baked goods, grain products (i.e. cereals, granola bars), desserts, and candy. Some foods like canned fruit and yogurt can have both natural sugar and added sugars.

Important Note: All 100% fruit and vegetable juice and plain dried fruit is ranked Yellow (Choose Sometimes). Products like raisins, banana chips, and dried pineapple (if they don't have added sugars) would be ranked Yellow because they contain more concentrated levels of natural sugar than fresh fruit.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 8 fl oz (240mL)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 5mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 27g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 25g	
Includes 23g Added Sugars	46%
Protein 0g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 40mg	0%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Image: New FDA Nutrition Label

4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon

