

SAFE TO EAT

(and drink)

Kids like you haven't always had healthy things to munch and sip.

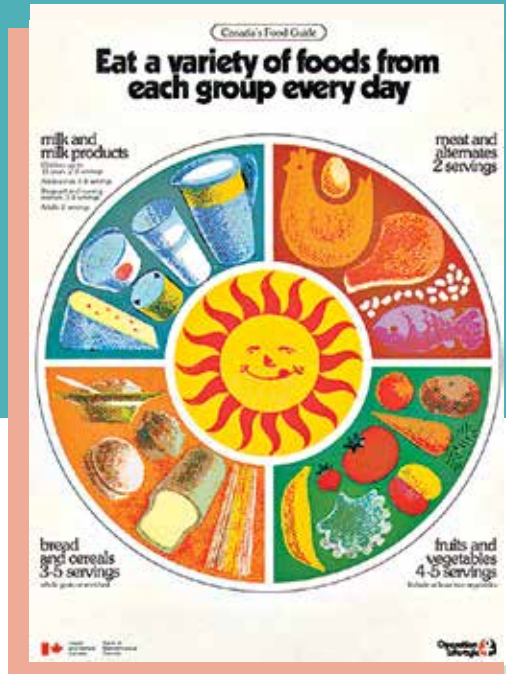


FOOD

Can you believe we've only known about vitamins in food for about 100 years? Before that, people often didn't realize their kids were falling sick because of *malnutrition* — not getting enough of the right kinds of food. European settlers who were well-off often ate too much meat and rich food, while poor people ate a lot of cheap foods such as oatmeal porridge and potatoes. Neither way of eating was healthy.



Traditional Indigenous foods are harvested from the land and water. Indigenous people generally had much healthier diets than European settlers did. European settlers made it difficult for Indigenous peoples to keep their harvesting traditions. Settlers built fences and limited Indigenous peoples to reserves. This reduced Indigenous peoples' access to fresh nutritious foods and led some families to introduce preserved settler foods to their diets.

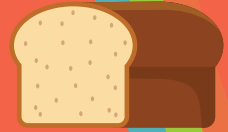


The Canada Food Guide has changed a lot since it first came out in 1942. (This version is from 1977.) It suggests healthy things to eat and how much of each you should have each day.



Illustration: History of Canada's Food Guides

By 1944, Newfoundland and Labrador (which was not yet part of Canada) started adding vitamins and minerals to flour and margarine. This boosted the health of people in small villages, where it was hard to get fresh fruit and vegetables.



All over Canada, there are government inspectors checking that restaurants and factories that make food are doing it safely.

MILK

We think of milk as one of the healthiest things around, but before scientists knew how to kill germs in it, and before the government made rules about it, milk could be deadly. A process called pasteurization got rid of diseases like tuberculosis, so it was safe. But in the late 1800s and early 1900s (especially in cities) cheaters added water along with ground-up chalk or powdered plaster, and sold it as regular milk.

Starting in 1965, the government required dairy companies to add Vitamin D to milk. Soon there were way fewer kids getting rickets, a condition where bones are weak and badly formed.



WATER

Unclean water can carry all kinds of diseases that used to make kids very sick and even cause death. When cities and towns started to clean up streets and treat water to kill germs, cases of diseases carried in water, like cholera and typhoid, fell sharply. As homes got running water and indoor toilets, things improved even more. While most Canadians now have clean, safe water to drink, there are still many First Nations communities where the water is not safe. People there have to boil their water or buy it.



What would you think if you were in a train station and instead of a water fountain, there was a pail of water with a cup that everyone dipped in? One health official called it “an invitation to a house party for germs.” By about 1920, public dippers like this were starting to disappear.