

The Cost of Nutritious Meals and Snacks for Children in Saskatchewan 2022

A tool for childcare, schools and community organizations to help with planning for the cost of healthy food.



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The food and drinks offered in childcare settings, schools and community programs can affect children's learning, health and well-being. The cost of food and drinks, as well as available program funding and budgets, can influence the types of foods offered. Planning for the cost of nutritious food in meal and snack programs helps to ensure quality options are available.

How to use this resource

This resource shows the average cost of basic healthy meals and snacks for children across Saskatchewan, based on food prices collected in June of 2022. Childcare facilities, schools and community organizations can use this to:

- Estimate the cost for food used in programming
- Help identify budget needs
- Support grant applications



Why it is important to offer nutritious and culturally appropriate foods for children

- Providing a variety of nutritious foods can help children feel good about eating while supporting growth, development and their ability to learn (1).
- Including cultural foods in programs can promote cultural awareness and learning, increase familiarity with and consumption of a wider variety of foods (6-9).
- When programs offer nutritious foods, it helps reinforce the message that eating well is important (3), and can help children learn to enjoy nutritious foods (4).
- Healthy eating patterns can protect against developing chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease (5).

Other food program cost considerations

- There are other factors to consider when planning a budget beyond the cost of food and drinks such as staff wages and training, storage equipment, and serving supplies.
- Food costs can vary based on children's ages. Younger children have small stomachs and tend to eat smaller amounts of food, while older children need to eat more for their growth and development needs, so food costs will be higher.
- Pre-packaged and convenience foods were not included in the estimated costs in this tool. If these items are included, the costs could be higher.
- Meal and snack costs in this tool are based on average package sizes found in most grocery stores. There may be some savings by purchasing in bulk through a food service distributor or grocery wholesale company.

Table 1. The average cost of breakfast, lunch, and a snack for one child per day in Saskatchewan			
*Geographical Area	Sample Breakfast Cost/Child/Day	Sample Lunch Cost/Child/Day	Sample Snack Cost/Child/Day
Northern Saskatchewan			
Far North	\$2.93	\$ 2.72	\$1.70
North West	\$2.63	\$2.39	\$1.28
North East	\$2.71	\$2.61	\$1.30
Northern Town	\$2.14	\$2.03	\$0.98
North Average	\$2.60	\$2.39	\$1.29
Southern Saskatchewan			
Rural	\$2.25	\$2.18	\$1.09
Town	\$2.15	\$2.07	\$1.05
Small City	\$1.81	\$1.74	\$0.87
Large City	\$1.77	\$1.69	\$0.85
South Average	\$1.96	\$1.88	\$0.94
Total Saskatchewan Average	\$2.07	\$1.96	\$1.00
*Northern communities are over 100 km north of Prince Albert and are classified by geographic location and ease of access		* Southern communities include Prince Albert surrounding area and South; they are classified by population size	
<p>Far North: Low access with air travel as the main form of transportation. Some communities have limited seasonal roads.</p> <p>North West: Moderately accessible; majority gravel roads and air access.</p> <p>North East: Moderate and low access; gravel or seasonal roads or air travel as the main forms of transportation.</p> <p>Northern Town: Highly accessible; paved roads, access to nearby towns and cities and air access.</p>		<p>Rural: less than 500 people</p> <p>Town: between 500 and 4,999 people</p> <p>Small City: between 5,000 and 99,000 people</p> <p>Large City: more than 100,000 people</p>	

The costs shown above were calculated using a sample one-week menu based on Canada's Food Guide recommendations. Food costs were collected in June 2022. For more information about the data collection see *The Cost of Healthy Eating in Saskatchewan 2022*. (10).

Example calculation for a food program

A school in Far North Saskatchewan offers a breakfast program for 400 students 180 days a year. Table 1 shows that the average cost of breakfast for the Far North is \$2.93 for each student. The following steps show how to calculate the food costs for the program.

Step 1. Calculate the cost of food for one day:

(Far North cost of breakfast for a child per day) X (number of children)

$$\text{\$ } 2.93 \times 400 = \text{\$ } 1,172.00 \text{ for one day}$$

Step 2: Calculate the cost of the breakfast program for the year:

(the cost of food for one day as calculated in step 1) X (number of days)

$$\text{\$ } 1,172.00 \times 180 = \text{\$ } 210,960.00$$

In this example, the cost of food for a nutritious breakfast program for one year = **\\$ 210,960.00**

Step 3: Calculate the cost of food for additional meals and snacks

If your program offers multiple meals and snacks, simply complete the steps above for each and then add them together.

Recommended Resources

- **Nutrition guidelines in SK childcare settings** can be found in the 'Saskatchewan Child Care Licensee Manual' at www.saskatchewan.ca.
- **SK School Food Guidelines** and 'Nourishing Minds: Eat Well – Learn Well – Live Well' can be found at www.saskatchewan.ca

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