

Healthy Eating Research (HER) Guidelines

What are they?

- **Nutrition guidelines** tailored to the unique needs and capacity of the **charitable food system (food banks, pantries, meal programs)**
- Will help **improve the quality of foods** in food banks
- Will **increase access to and promote healthier food choices** in food banks and with our partners

Table 1: Nutrition Guidelines for Ranking Charitable Food

Food Category*	Example Products	Choose Often			Choose Sometimes			Choose Rarely		
		Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables; frozen broccoli with cheese sauce, apple sauce, tomato sauce, 100% juice, 100% fruit popsicle	≤ 2 g	≤ 230 mg	0 g	All 100% juice and plain dried fruit			≥ 2.5 g***	≥ 480 mg	≥ 12 g
Grains	Bread, rice, pasta, grains with seasoning mixes	First ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥ 2.5 g***	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥ 2.5 g***	≥ 480 mg	≥ 12 g
Protein	Animal (beef, pork, poultry, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs, eggs) and plant proteins (nuts, seeds, veggie burgers, soy, beans, peanut butter)	≤ 2 g	≤ 230 mg	≤ 6 g	2.5-4.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥ 5 g	≥ 480 mg	≥ 12 g

Why HER?

- **Food insecurity** is a complex problem, with many families also experiencing other challenges, such as lack of affordable housing, low income, lack of transportation, and fewer social supports.
- People living in low-income neighborhoods lack access to healthy food, which has led to **inequalities in diet quality and higher prevalence of chronic disease**.

HER Ranking System

- Three- tiered system based on amount of **saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar** in foods.

Color	Criteria	Examples
Green: "choose often"	Foods are lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar	All produce automatically ranks as green
Yellow: "choose sometimes"	Foods can vary in one or all nutrients	Canned vegetables, refined grains
Red: "choose rarely"	Foods are high in either saturated fat, sodium, added sugar, or a combination of all three.	All desserts and most processed and packaged snacks rank as red

Note: Items such as condiments, cooking staples, and miscellaneous products (protein powders, nutritional supplements, baby food) remain unranked.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the HER Ranking System!