

Dear Parent,

You may have heard your child use the terms Go, Slow, and Whoa! If so he or she is learning a great deal about making healthier choices. Last year we began a pilot program introducing slow menu changes and nutrition education in the cafeteria. This year our pilot program has expanded to include more education on nutrition and physical activity as well as additional menu changes to include more whole grains, dark green and orange vegetables and fruits! We wanted to take a minute to send you a note on the Go, Slow, Whoa program details so that a unified message can be provided to our children at home as well! It really is a fun program and such an easy way to classify foods for a healthy lifestyle for anyone, even adults.

GO foods, are the foods that we should eat often and daily. All fruits and vegetables will qualify as GO foods. So think “green light” and go for a fruit or vegetable as often as you can. According to MyPlate and MyPyramid, school aged children should eat 1.5 c of fruit and 1.5-2.5 c of vegetables per day. These can be cooked, canned, fresh, or frozen. You can even eat with a little dip or dressing-just try not to overdo it! Adults should have around 3 servings of fruit and at least 3-5 servings of vegetables per day.

Low fat and nonfat milk products also qualify as GO foods. Kids should have at least 3 servings of dairy products daily, which could include low fat cheese or yogurt in addition to milk. Smoothies are a great option to provide calcium rich foods like yogurt, and they are a great way to get breakfast in everyday!

Whole grains are also GO foods. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Whole grains will contain more fiber, to check for good sources of fiber look for products that have 10% to 19% of the Daily Value; excellent sources contain 20% or more. When comparing breads look for words such as: “whole wheat flour, barley, rye, triticale, oat, etc.” Avoid products that use refined flour which has been stripped down and does not include the entire grain anymore. Remember whole grains should make up half our overall grain choices, so this does leave some room for the occasional white bun. Try adding in more whole wheat pasta, brown rice...you can start by adding half to your normal recipe and gradually transition to all whole wheat or brown rice. Popcorn, go easy on the butter, can be a great snack that is also whole grain!

WHOA foods: Examples include candy, cookies, chips, fried foods, ice cream, soft drinks, and sugary cereals. WHOA foods are generally the most processed and are highest in unhealthy fats, added sugars, and/or salt.

SLOW foods are in between GO foods and WHOA foods. Examples include sweetened (including flavored) 1% milk, refined-grain foods, and fruit with added sugar.

The most healthful type of meal includes mostly GO foods. Here are two examples of healthful meals.

GO Breakfast

Oatmeal without added sugar (GO)

Fresh blueberries (GO)

Brown sugar (WHOA)

1% milk (GO)

GO Lunch

Turkey sandwich: Whole-wheat bread (GO); Turkey without skin (GO)

Mustard (GO); American cheese (WHOA); Tomato (GO); Lettuce (GO)

Baked potato chips (SLOW)

Canned peaches without added sugar (GO)

Skim milk (GO)

For a more detailed description and a comprehensive listing of GO, SLOW, and WHOA foods please email Kerri Knippen, the Healthier US School Challenge at kerricknippen@gmail.com.

Kind regards

Principal Kerri Knippen, MPH, RD, LD, BCADM