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## SUMMARY

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Stuart Hall Upper and Lower lunch menus succeed in offering red-orange vegetables regularly. However, the menus fail to offer all other classes of vegetables regularly, fresh fruit daily, non-dairy milks, 100% whole grains, other plant-based proteins like legumes, and warm, meatless meals centered around plant proteins. In addition, red meat and other high-cholesterol foods should be restricted to fewer than two offerings per week while processed meats should be eliminated. As a result of these deficiencies, the menus at Stuart Hall schools earn an "F" score.



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## STRENGTHS

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Red-orange vegetables offered regularly

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## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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Ensure all classes of vegetables are served twice per week



Immediately remove processed meat (chicken nuggets, hot dogs, bacon, pepperoni, lunch meat)



Restrict high-cholesterol foods like red meat and eggs



Emphasize 100% whole grains and restrict ultra-processed products heavy in refined grains and sugars



Offer fresh fruit daily



Offer legumes in some form daily



Serve water or plant-based milk options alongside dairy



Offer warm entrees centered around plant proteins daily



Improve menu transparency and add portion sizes of all meats to the menu

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## BALANCING MENUS

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Given that a significant and increasing proportion of children today show signs of metabolic syndrome, including high blood cholesterol, and diabetes or pre-diabetes, focusing menu reforms on three dietary components—saturated fat, cholesterol, and fiber—is a particularly high-impact way to improve food environments so that they will promote children's long-term health.

There is a robust causal link between saturated fat intake and elevated LDL cholesterol levels, a well-established marker for risk of heart disease and cardiovascular events. In addition to increasing risk for cardiovascular diseases, higher saturated fat intake is a significant risk factor for systemic inflammation, insulin resistance, and obesity.

Furthermore, the oxidation of dietary cholesterol, found only in animal products, poses significant potential health risks. Cholesterol oxidation products (COPs) are likely involved in both initiation and progression of chronic diseases, including atherosclerosis, neurodegenerative disease, kidney failure, and diabetes.

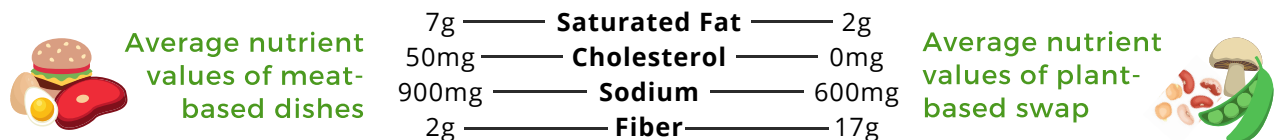
Regrettably, less than 3% of American children meet or exceed the minimum adequate intake of fiber per day, which may constitute the most widespread nutrient deficiency in the United States. This profound lack of dietary fiber—found in phytonutrient-rich, whole plant foods but not highly refined foods or animal products—combined with general overconsumption of saturated fats and cholesterol is a clear indicator of the imbalance of our food environments and the need for change.

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## ENHANCING HEALTHFULNESS

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Other schools like Stuart Hall School have improved the healthfulness of their menus by balancing their menus to feature more fresh, whole-food plant products and fewer meat and ultra-processed food products. An example of one simple change that accomplishes both is below. The following information assumes the serving size for each entree is 3 ounces. For a custom assessment, please contact us at [menus@balanced.org](mailto:menus@balanced.org).



Replacing one meat-based entree per week with a plant-based entree would:



Replacing one chocolate chip cookie dessert with 1/2 cup of strawberries would **eliminate**:

