School tuckshops around Queensland are becoming healthier than ever as they adopt a traffic light system of what to serve students.

The changes, under the Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools, are mandatory in state schools from January next year, but many schools are making the change by July this year.

Catholic and Independent schools have also jumped on board with the changes, playing an active role in enforcing the strategy.

Under the new policy, foods full of fat and sugar (red) will be severely restricted, some not-so-healthy foods (amber) will be moderately available, and healthy fresh fruits and vegetables and low fat options such as pita rolls, salads and sushi will be recommended tuckshop tucker (green).

**Smart choices**

Green “go” foods (have plenty) will be readily available and include wholegrain breads, fresh fruit and vegetables, lean meat and fish.

Amber “whoa” foods (select carefully) will be available in moderation — only on certain days of the week and in small serving sizes — and include full-fat dairy products, processed meat, cakes, muffins and fruit juice.

Red “no” foods (occasionally) are foods that are high in saturated fats, salt and sugar including soft drinks, meat pies and deep-fried snacks and will only be available twice per term.

The new guidelines, developed by nutrition experts, will not only apply to tuckshops, but also to fundraising ventures, vending machines, excursions, camps, classroom rewards and sports days.
Leading the way

Some Queensland schools are already leading the way. Warwick State High School tuckshop convenor and qualified chef, Sue Pulley, says the school’s tuckshop priorities this year are to remove products high in sugar, introduce small portion sizes and encourage students to make healthy choices.

“The school now offers a fresh salad bar including coleslaw, potato salad, pasta salad and fruit salad; chilli chicken wraps; paninis; 100 percent fruit juices; low-fat milk; small packets of chips and low-fat, low-salt pies and sausages rolls. In winter, the tuckshop will supply homemade soups,” Ms Pulley says.

“When an apple slinky machine was introduced — it takes an apple, cores it and leaves a trail of apple flesh — our students ate more than 130 apples in two days.”

Clayfield College has removed all soft drinks and vending machines.

Tuckshop manager Alison Seccombe says the school’s tuckshop sales have trebled since it began offering a wider range of healthier choices, including teas, milks, fresh juices, sushi, fruit salad, pesto and avocado pasta salad, Greek yoghurts and salads with chicken, tuna or ham.

“More students are purchasing breakfast, morning tea and lunch because parents are more confident the choices are healthy,” Ms Seccombe says.

Message starts at home

The new strategy does not address the food students bring to school but Nutrition Australia dietician Kellie Hogan says it is important parents set a good example.

“So much of children’s behaviour and learning is modelled on parents so the habits they form now are likely to stick with them throughout their life,” Ms Hogan says.

Tips for parents (Nutrition Australia)

• Always have plenty of healthy foods available for children and encourage them to eat these foods regularly
• Lead by example. Healthy parents = healthy children
• Offer children a variety of nutritious foods and allow them to choose those they like
• Empower children by getting them to help pack their lunchbox. They are much more likely to eat the foods if they have had a hand in picking them.

The 5-Day Healthy Lunchbox (Nutrition Australia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ham and tomato</td>
<td>Egg and lettuce sandwich</td>
<td>Salad pita pocket</td>
<td>Chicken and salad wrap</td>
<td>White roll with peanut paste</td>
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<tr>
<td>multigrain roll</td>
<td>on wholemeal bread</td>
<td>Crackers and cheese</td>
<td>Celery, cucumber, carrot and capsicum sticks</td>
<td>Chicken drumstick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Fruit loaf/raisin bread with avocado spread</td>
<td>Pineapple pieces</td>
<td>Dried apple</td>
<td>Celery, cucumber, carrot and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pikelet with berries</td>
<td>Cherry tomatoes</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>capsicum sticks</td>
<td>capsicum sticks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almonds</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Orange and poppyseed muffin</td>
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<td>Dried apricots</td>
<td>Kiwi fruit</td>
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<td>Tub of yoghurt</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rockmelon balls</td>
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