

When Mikey won't eat: City daycares ban trans fat, but parents still hungry for nutritious meals [CA-ON] ^[1]

Author: Yuen, Jenny

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EXCERPTS

Are the goodies city-run daycares feed to kids slowly clogging their little arteries?

Last month, the Board of Health adopted a motion to eliminate all trans fats from menus in the 56 city-owned childcare centres, a first step that may lead to a ban on trans fats in restaurants.

Children's services spokesperson Elizabeth Moffat said oatmeal muffins, beef patties and margarine were taken off the menu earlier this year after recommendations from a federal task force on trans fats.

And while many lauded the move, some parents who showed up at the April 16 meeting complained that the board had not gone far enough.

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Lorraine Bellisle, a dietician with Children's Services, says that since the meeting the board has removed fig and date newtons and graham and soda crackers that were labelled trans-fat-free but contained hydrogenated oils. A transfat-containing pasta primavera mix will be removed in June.

But it isn't just unhealthy oils that feed complaints about the menu. Parent Andreea Ionescu urged that daycares dump canned foods, since the linings of tin cans have been shown to contain hormone-disrupting bisphenol A. "This is unacceptable," she said.

She also wondered why the city isn't going completely organic, like some private daycares.

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Moffat says the city is willing to look into organics and has embarked on a series of consultations with parents to get their feedback on the daycare diet. But, she says, "providing food for 50 kids is a very different matter from providing for 3,000 kids. Because of the number of sites, we have to work with a company that has the capacity to meet our needs."

Martha Friendly, University of Toronto's childcare resource and research unit coordinator, says Canada is far behind Europe in terms of early childhood programs, especially in regulating nutritious food for kids. "It's like we're living in a cave here," she says.

- reprinted from Now Magazine

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