In this curriculum, **food** refers to both food and beverages.

**Added fats**
Fats added to a food product during processing or preparation. Baked goods and fried foods, for example, are often high in added fats. In contrast, avocados, coconuts and whole milk are examples of foods that contain naturally-occurring fats.

**Added sugars**
Sugars added to a food product during processing or preparation. Sodas, energy drinks, cereal bars and breakfast cereals, for example, are often high in added sugars. In contrast, apples, berries and other fruits contain naturally-occurring sugars.

**Calorie**
A measure of energy. Dietary calories refer to the amount of energy available in food or the amount of energy the body uses. People expend calories during breathing, pumping blood, digesting food, exercise and other activities; excess calories are generally stored as fat. On nutrition labels, dietary calories are technically listed in units of 1,000 calories, or kilocalories (kcal).

**Convenience food**
Food that has been processed to require little or no preparation on the part of consumers. Examples include canned foods, frozen pizzas and instant noodles.\(^1\)

**Diabetes**
A metabolic disease characterized by abnormally high levels of glucose in the blood. The most common form of diabetes is called type 2 diabetes. Obesity, lack of exercise and having a family history of diabetes are common risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

**Dietary nutrient**
Materials obtained through food that are used by the body for energy, growth and maintenance (in this curriculum, dietary nutrients refer to those consumed by humans). These include water, carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and fiber.\(^2\) See [nutrient-dense](#) and [nutrient-poor](#).

**Farm Bill**
A federal law that influences, to a large degree, what and how food is grown in the United States. The Farm Bill also sets the laws and funding amounts for domestic food and nutrition assistance programs, such as the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance](#) and [Women, Infants and Children](#) Programs, as well as international food aid programs. The Farm Bill falls under the responsibilities of the [USDA](#).

**Farm subsidies**
Money provided by the government to support farmers and agricultural industries.
Fiber
Parts of fruits, vegetables and grains that humans cannot digest. Fiber is very important in aiding digestion and reducing the risk of chronic disease.

Food environments
In this curriculum, we use this term to refer to homes, schools, stores, restaurants, community gardens, soup kitchens, food banks and other physical settings where the cost and availability of food influence what people eat. Some researchers use this term more broadly to also include social influences, food marketing and other influences on food choice.

Food processing
The practices used by food industries to transform raw plant and animal materials, such as grains, produce, meat and dairy, into products for consumers. Examples include freezing vegetables, milling wheat into flour and frying potato chips. Slaughtering animals is sometimes considered a form of food processing.

Food system
In this curriculum, the term food system refers to the people, activities, resources and outcomes involved in getting food from “field to plate,” in addition to preparing, eating and digesting food. Major activities in the food system include production, processing, distribution, retail and consumption (these first four activities constitute the supply chain). Outcomes in the food system include the effects of these activities on public health, equity and the environment.

Heart disease
A disorder that affects the heart’s ability to function normally. There are many forms of heart disease.

Nutrient-dense
Containing a large amount of certain key dietary nutrients—typically protein, fiber and a range of essential vitamins and minerals—relative to the amount of calories. Vegetables are generally considered the most nutrient-dense foods because they offer the most key vitamins and minerals per calorie. See nutrient-poor.

Nutrient-poor
Containing a large amount of calories relative to the amount of protein, vitamins and certain other key dietary nutrients. Foods generally considered nutrient-poor include cakes, cookies, candy, soft drinks, chips, ice cream and other products made with large amounts of sugars, fats, oils or refined grains. See nutrient-dense.

Obesity
Weighing more than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. Obese persons have a higher weight-to-height ratio than those that are overweight. Their body fat levels are also generally higher, putting them at greater risk for various diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.

Overweight
Weighing more than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. Overweight is generally associated with having a higher body fat percentage, though some people may classify as overweight even though they do not have excess body fat.

Public health
The science and practice of protecting and promoting the health of communities (as opposed to focusing on individual patients).
Refined grains
Grains that have been processed to remove the bran and germ, which contain important dietary nutrients like B vitamins, iron and fiber. Examples include wheat flour, enriched bread and white rice.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
A federally funded program that provides financial assistance for food purchasing to U.S. households below a certain income level. SNAP was formerly called the Food Stamp Program.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
The department responsible for developing and executing federal policies on food and agriculture. The work of the USDA includes promoting economic growth in the agriculture industry, enhancing food safety and providing food and nutrition assistance.

Whole grains
Unrefined grains that still contain the bran and germ. Examples include whole-wheat flour, oatmeal and brown rice.

Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)
A federally funded program that provides supplemental food, health care referrals and nutrition counseling for pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children under age five.
References


