

Food Bank Diet Challenge

You can demonstrate your support and play a role in this vital effort by living for 6 days on the limited food options faced by people on social assistance and talking about your experience of taking the challenge with members of your organization, friends, family, coworkers and local politicians.

You can take part on your own or with a group from your organization or from among your family and friends. Ask members of your group if they would like to keep a journal or blog about their experience as they take part. Discuss ways of sharing the experience afterwards.

The basic steps for taking part are listed below.

Step 1 - Tuesday, May 19th – noon

Meet at Trinity United Church (Main Street, Newmarket) lunch program for lunch. We will discuss the next steps and answer any questions in a short meeting following lunch.

Step 2 – There are two options: Tuesday, May 19th or Wednesday, May 20th

Option 1 - Go to the local Food Bank – We will contact local food banks and let them know you are taking the Food Bank Diet Challenge. We will arrange to go there at the beginning of the Challenge to pick up a typical food hamper. We ask that you make a donation to pay for the food hamper. We are doing it this way so you can get to feel the experience of using a food bank. Along with the food you receive from the food bank you can spend up to \$10 on other items that you may want such as protein for the 6 days.

Option 2 - Use the list of food attached to this guideline (Appendix) that is appropriate for the number of people in your family that are participating in the Challenge.

Remember the following: Take public transit or walk if possible to do your shopping. Purchase the lowest price brand and bring your own bags (you don't have the 5 cents to spare for each bag at the grocery store) If you choose this option we still recommend that you go to the food bank and let them know you are doing the Food Bank Diet Challenge and go through the process and return the items to them before you leave. This way you still get to have the experience.

Step 3 – Attend at least 1 other meal program in your area during the 6 days. We will give you a list of the meal programs in York Region. We encourage you to go to as many meal programs as you can as this will help you to get through on the limited amount of food that you have. Keep in mind that many of the families that use the food banks do not attend the meal programs as their children do not want to go as some of their peers may volunteer there.

Step 4 – Post to the Freedom 90 Facebook page regularly during the 6 days about how you are feeling and your thoughts about what those that use food banks have to go through. Throughout the duration of the project, we ask that you share as candidly as possible. Please try to share at least once a day – this can be as simple as writing a sentence, a paragraph, or posting a photo.

Step 5 – Thursday, May 28th, which is World Hunger Day, we will attend the post-diet reflection meeting (location still to be determined). We are inviting the media to this meeting.

Things to Think About For May 28th - How long did the food last? What was the hardest thing for you about the Challenge? • How did the Challenge diet affect your physical or emotional health? Did you 'cheat'? How? What kinds of conversations did you have with friends, family, co-workers? What do you want people in the community to know from your experience?

Other things we will be discussing are:

What do you want to tell our local MPP and everyone around you as a result of this experience?

How has this experience changed your way of thinking and looking at our social safety net?

We can discuss other issues you feel are relevant about the nature of poverty in your community.

Guidelines for Participants:

Your Challenge: is to rely on a diet that the working poor and those on social assistance might receive from a food bank. If a person on social assistance received this food from a food bank in Ontario, it would be a three day supply. For many, they would usually have to make it last even longer. The challenge is for you to eat this food for 6 days.

We request when going to the food bank and meal programs that you dress in casual attire. We recommend that you inform your family and friends of your participation in this project for the week. You will need their support to stay committed for the duration of the project.

We ask that you only eat meals prepared from contents in the food bank hamper and the Pantry List (see below) with the exception of going to the meal programs. No food or drinks at social gatherings, no coffee or tea or juice at meetings, or alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks bought for you by others, etc. If you are at a family gathering, dinner party, public event – you will need to say 'no' to other food.

Also included in your Food Bank Diet Challenge package is the Why Food Banks Don't Work for Everyone Insert

Lastly, don't forget to celebrate! This is a major accomplishment.

Appendix

Sample Food Hamper Contents (Source – Fort York Food Bank)

Try and eat only what's on the list (along with five standard pantry ingredients – for example oil, flour, salt, coffee, tea) for 6 days, as it is the experience of people who use food banks to have to make the food last for a week or more.

Single person

2 boxes Kraft Dinner (or substitute extra rice if gluten-intolerant)
3 juice boxes
3 single-serving-size scoops dry rice
2 small cans soup
1 box of dry cereal or 3 packages instant oatmeal
2 - 175 g tin of tuna, chicken or turkey
small jar peanut butter
3 eggs
2 small cans of canned vegetables or 1 can vegetables and 1 fruit
1 potato and 1 onion
1 can plain beans or chickpeas, or 1 can pork and beans
3 granola bars or 3 fruit chews
1 litre milk
1 loaf bread (or substitute extra rice)

Two people

500 g dried pasta (or substitute extra rice)
1 small can tomato sauce or tomato paste
6 juice boxes
6 scoops dry rice
4 small cans soup
2 boxes of dry cereal or 6 packages instant oatmeal
4 - 175 g tin of tuna, chicken or turkey
small jar peanut butter
3 eggs
4 small cans of canned vegetables, or 3 vegetables and 1 fruit
2 potatoes, 1 onion and 1 carrot
2 cans beans or pork and beans
6 granola bars or fruit chews
2 litres milk
1 loaf bread (or substitute extra rice)

Family

900 g dried pasta (or extra rice)
2 small cans tomato sauce or tomato paste
3 juice boxes per person
2 small cans soup per person
1 small can prepared pasta (mac & cheese, spaghetti, etc)
3 scoops dry rice per person
1 box dry cereal per person or 3 packages instant oatmeal per person
2 per person of standard protein sources: (175 g tin of tuna, chicken or turkey
1 small jar peanut butter
3 eggs or one package chicken hot dogs plus ONE additional protein source per person
2 small cans of vegetables per person, or substitute up to 2 cans canned fruit
1 can beans or pork & beans per person
2 potatoes, 1 onion and 2 carrots
3 granola bars or fruit chews per person
1 litre milk per person
1 loaf bread per person (or extra rice)

The Standard Pantry List consists of: Vegetable oil, flour, salt, sugar, coffee, tea, margarine, soy sauce, ketchup, garlic, spices. Participants can use up to 5 ingredients from this list, provided that they already have these items in their kitchen. We also ask that you keep track of the quantity of each item used from the Pantry List.