

Healthy Eating Overview

Action Schools! BC

The Healthy Eating Overview is designed to provide teachers with the background information required to support the delivery of Action Schools! BC instructional examples, activities and extension activities.

Action Schools! BC Healthy Eating activities and instructional examples are designed to make healthy eating come alive in the classroom and school, and to enable students to make healthy food choices within school environments that support healthy eating as the easy choice. Delivering healthy eating activities and lessons is one way schools can improve students' level of food literacy and support them in making healthy choices.

Action Schools! BC healthy eating resources focus on three areas specific to healthy eating and food literacy:

- **Increasing vegetable and fruit consumption**
- **Making healthy drink choices**
- **Limiting high sodium food and drinks**

Developing critical thinking and media awareness is also featured in select activities.

WHAT IS HEALTHY EATING?

Healthy eating is a pattern of eating that contributes to best possible health through positive relationships with food and diverse, balanced food choices that meet a person's needs for nutrients and energy.

WHY IS HEALTHY EATING IMPORTANT?

Healthy eating promotes and supports social, physical, and mental wellbeing for all people at all ages and stages of life and contributes to the overall health of individuals, families, and communities.

(Dietitian Services at HealthlinkBC, 2013)

WHAT IS FOOD LITERACY?

Food Literacy is the knowledge, attitudes and skills that people have about food. Food literate individuals have many competencies such as the knowledge of what constitutes healthy eating, an understanding of how food is connected to health and well-being, and having a positive relationship with food.

Why Is Food Literacy Important?

Food literacy can improve individual decision-making with regards to purchasing, preparing and consuming food throughout the life course.¹ According to a collaborative study by Health Canada on the state of cooking and food preparation skills among children and families, food literacy has the potential to reverse the trend of an increased reliance on convenience foods, and therefore, the associated rise in chronic disease observed in Canada.²

Food literacy can have positive dietary outcomes, health outcomes, and environmental outcomes across populations. For example, food literacy can impact health outcomes by improving food safety, increasing food label reading, improving cooking skills, and contributing to healthier dietary choices. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between nutritional knowledge and healthy eating or dietary quality.³

As mentioned previously, this resource focuses on the following three areas specific to healthy eating and food literacy:

- **Increasing vegetable and fruit consumption**
- **Making healthy drink choices**
- **Limiting high sodium food and drinks**

Developing critical thinking and media awareness is also featured in select activities.

1. Howard, A., & Brichta, J. (2013). What's to Eat: Improving Food Literacy in Canada. The Conference Board of Canada.

www.conferenceboard.ca/cfic

2. Chenhall, C. (2010). Improving Cooking and Food Preparation Skills: A Synthesis of the Evidence to Inform Program and Policy Development. Pan Canadian Public Health Network.

3. Conference Board of Canada. What's to Eat? Improving Food Literacy in Canada. October 2013

HOW IS HEALTHY EATING CONNECTED TO MENTAL WELL-BEING?

The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”⁴ Mental well-being can also be expressed as a sense of feeling good and functioning well. What we do and how we think can impact our well-being and we can take action to help us be at our best.⁵

Eating a balanced diet with a variety of healthy foods provides nutrients that help to support overall physical and mental health. Choosing healthy foods more often, having a healthy breakfast, and eating regular meals can keep your mood and energy levels steady.⁶

GETTING STARTED

The following sections provide key messages and other foundational information to get you started. Refer back to this section as you prepare for the lessons and activities.

The registered dietitians at HealthLink BC are available to answer your food and nutrition related questions. Call 811 and ask to speak with a registered dietitian. Alternatively, you can email your question directly to healthlinkbc@gov.bc.ca or through the HealthLink BC website.

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

This section explains why it is important to eat vegetables and fruit.

Information relating to conducting tasting activities with students, food safety considerations, messaging relating to variety and information on produce grown in BC can be found in this section.

Recommended guidelines:

- Make a healthy choice. Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies.
- Children aged 4 to 8 should eat a minimum of 5 food guide servings of vegetables and fruit each day.
- Children and youth aged 9 to 13 should eat a minimum of 6 food guide servings of vegetables and fruit each day.

4. World Health Organization (WHO). Prevention and Promotion in Mental Health. 2002. Geneva, WHO

5. <https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/mental-wellbeing>

6. <https://www.cmha.bc.ca/documents/improving-mental-health/#A>

- Eat one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
- Choose vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
- Drink water – it's always a great choice.

Why Are They Important?

The Vegetables and Fruit food group is the largest arc in the rainbow on *Canada's Food Guide*, emphasizing the key role these foods play in a healthy eating pattern.

Vegetables and fruit include important nutrients such as carbohydrates (including fibre), vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Choosing a wide variety of colourful vegetables and fruit helps to ensure we get all of the nutrients we need.

A diet that includes a wide variety of vegetables and fruit helps children to grow, learn and play. Additionally, this may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular or heart disease and some types of cancer, as well as help to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

The recommended number of servings is different for people at different stages of life and is different for males and females after age 14. *Canada's Food Guide* recommends a minimum of 5 servings a day of vegetables and fruit for children aged 4 to 8 years and a minimum of 6 per day for children aged 9 to 13 years.

Canada's Food Guide - Eat Well Plate is another resource that helps build healthy meals and encourages making half your plate vegetables and fruit at each meal (<http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/alt/pdf/eating-nutrition/healthy-eating-saine-alimentation/tips-conseils/interactive-tools-outils-interactifs/eat-well-bien-manger-eng.pdf>).

Canada's Food Guide has been translated into 12 languages. Visit Health Canada's website to download translated copies. In addition to the translated Food Guides, Canada also has a *First Nations, Inuit and Métis Food Guide*. The "My Food Guide" tool on the Health Canada website allows individuals to create a personalized food guide using the foods that are part of their eating pattern. You can choose to print this tool in either English or French.

References:

- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>)
- Health Canada's The Eat Well Plate (<http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/healthy-eating-saine-alimentation/tips-conseils/interactive-tools-outils-interactifs/eat-well-bien-manger-eng.php>)
- Canadian Paediatric Society (<http://www.cps.ca>)
- Dietitians of Canada (<http://www.dietitians.ca/>)

What Is a Vegetable?

Vegetable is not a botanical term, but rather a culinary term which generally refers to any edible part of a plant that is not regarded as a fruit, nut, herb, spice, or grain. Vegetables can include leaves (lettuce), stems (asparagus), roots (carrots), tubers (potatoes), flowers (broccoli), bulbs (garlic), and seeds (peas and beans). Some botanical fruit such as cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, and sweet peppers are usually referred to as vegetables.

What Is a Fruit?

In botany, a fruit is the ripened seed-bearing part of a flowering plant. In cuisine when discussing fruit as food, the term usually refers to just those plant fruits that are sweet and fleshy (e.g., plums, apples, and oranges). Many foods are botanically fruit but are treated as vegetables in cooking. These include cucurbits (e.g., squash, pumpkins, and cucumbers), tomatoes, peas, beans, corn, eggplants, and peppers.

Vegetable and Fruit Tasting

Repeated exposure to food, including seeing, smelling, and touching new food, and preparation and tasting, is the most effective way to influence a child's eating behaviours. See the *Action Schools! BC Extension Activities*, available at www.actionschoolsbc.ca for great ways to conduct tasting activities with students.

- The objective of a tasting party is to have students sample a vegetable or fruit – not to provide a full serving to each student.
- Children may be more willing to try new types of food with their peers. Providing a relaxed setting without forcing them to try new foods helps to build a healthy relationship with food.
- Fresh vegetables and fruit work best for tasting activities. Choose local vegetables and fruit that are in season when possible. If fresh vegetables and fruit are not available, try dried fruit with no added sugar; frozen vegetables and fruit with no added salt or sugar; or canned vegetables and fruit in water, juice, or light syrup (has added sugar).
- See the *Food Safety Considerations* information for important reminders about food safety when conducting tasting activities with students.
- Visit Healthy Schools BC for programs and supports that may be available to your school to support healthy eating, including providing grants or fruits and vegetables directly (www.healthyschoolsbc.ca).
- Using *Food Tasting Chart* (available at www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources) allows students to reflect on what they are tasting, use their senses, and develop their vocabulary.

Name of vegetable or fruit: _____

I've tried this vegetable or fruit _____ times.

Description		😊	😐	😞
Taste				
Texture				
Appearance				

Buying Locally Grown Food Has Many Advantages

Whether it is purchasing the produce for your Tasting Party or teaching students about the food system, it is important to highlight the benefits of growing and/or purchasing local food.

Buying Locally Is Good for the Economy

Dollars spent on locally grown food are reinvested back into the community, which contributes to the growth of small businesses, generates local jobs, raises property values, and leads to strong health care, education, and recreation sectors.

Buying Locally Is Good for the Environment

Food produced and consumed locally has a smaller carbon footprint. It uses less fossil fuel for transportation and requires less material for packaging compared to mainstream food production.

References

- *Fighting Global Warming at the Farmer's Market: A FoodShare Research in Action Report*, Second Edition, April 2005 (http://foodshare.net/custom/uploads/2015/11/Fighting_Global_Warming_at_the_Farmers_Market.pdf)
- BC Agriculture in the Classroom (www.aitc.ca/bc/)

Recommended Resources

- Healthy Families BC (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/eating)
- HealthLink BC – Healthy Eating (www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating)
- Health Canada
 - *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* (available in 12 languages and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis; free class sets available) (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>)
 - *Canada's Food Guide: A Resource for Educators and Communicators* (F) (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/educ-comm/resource-ressource-eng.php>)
 - *Eat Well and Be Active Educational Toolkit* (F) (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/educ-comm/toolkit-trousse/index-eng.php>)
 - *Eat Well Plate* (<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/healthy-eating-saine-alimentation/tips-conseils/interactive-tools-outils-interactifs/eat-well-bien-manger-eng.php>)
- HealthLink BC: Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian (www.healthlinkbc.ca)
- Canadian Paediatric Society – Caring for Kids (www.caringforkids.cps.ca)

BC Grown Vegetables and Fruit

An abundance of produce grows right here in BC. With a wide variety of climates and growing conditions, availability throughout the province varies.

spring

apples • Asian vegetables* • asparagus
cabbage • celery • chard • cucumbers
garlic • kale • leeks • lettuce
mustard greens • onions • parsnips
peas • potatoes • radishes
rhubarb • salad greens • spinach
tomatoes • turnips

summer

apples • apricots • artichokes
Asian vegetables* • asparagus
beans • beets • blackberries
blueberries • broccoli • Brussels
sprouts • cabbage • carrots
cauliflower • celery • chard • cherries
corn • cucumbers • currents • eggplant
fennel • garlic • gooseberries • grapes
huckleberries • kale • leeks • lettuce
melons • mustard greens • nectarines • onions
parsnips • peaches • pear • peas • peppers
plums • potatoes • prunes • pumpkins
quince • radishes • raspberries • rhubarb
rutabagas • salad greens
Saskatoon berries • shallots
spinach • strawberries
summer squash
tomatoes • turnip
winter squash
zucchini

fall

apples • Asian vegetables*
artichokes • beets • beans
blueberries • broccoli
Brussels sprouts • cabbage
carrots • cauliflower • celery
chard • corn • cranberries
cucumber • eggplant • fennel
garlic • grapes • huckleberries • kale
kiwi • leeks • lettuce • melons
mustard greens • onions • parsnips
pears • peppers • plums • potatoes
prunes • pumpkin • quince • radishes
rutabaga • salad greens • spinach
strawberries • tomatoes • turnips
winter squash • zucchini

winter

apples • beets
Brussels sprouts
cabbage • carrots
cucumbers • kale
kiwi • leeks • onions
parsnips • pears
potatoes • pumpkin
rutabagas • turnips
winter squash

** (e.g. bok choy, choy sum, gai chong, sui choy, gai lan, daikon, lotus root)*

Check out what's grown in your region at
www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca

FOOD SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

There are steps to take to prevent illness and make fresh vegetables and fruit safe to eat.

- When buying and storing vegetables and fruit, always keep them separate from raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood. Juices from raw foods can be contaminated with germs that cause illness.
- Always wash hands with soap and warm running water before preparing any food, including vegetables and fruit.
- Any person who is sick and has symptoms of diarrhea or vomiting, or who has infected cuts or sores, should not be allowed to handle food in any way.
- Always wash and sanitize* surfaces where foods are prepared and placed.
- Dishcloths must be washed well and sanitized regularly.
- Take extra care to thoroughly clean vegetables and fruit, especially dirty produce. Wash them in a diluted dish soap solution and then rinse in clean running water.
- When washing vegetables and fruit, cut away any damaged or bruised areas since harmful germs can grow there. Compost or throw away any rotten vegetables and fruit.
- Wash and scrub vegetables and fruit that have a firm, rough surface such as potatoes, using a clean scrub brush for produce.
- Always wash vegetables and fruit that have a rind, before peeling or preparing them, such as pineapples, cantaloupe, oranges, melon and squash. Although the skin and outer surfaces protect them, germs can grow if the surface gets broken, pierced or cut, especially in melons and tomatoes.
- Always discard the outer leaves of leafy vegetables grown in or near the ground, such as lettuce and cabbage. The outer leaves are more likely to be contaminated with germs.
- Raw sprouted seed products, such as bean sprouts, radish sprouts, alfalfa sprouts, mung beans and others, may carry germs that cause illness. Always cook these before eating because it is difficult to wash sprouted seeds.
- Contaminated foods may not look or smell bad so if in doubt, throw it out!
- Be cognizant of any food allergies that your students may have prior to activities that involve food.
- You can make a sanitizing solution:
 - Mix 15 ml (1 tablespoon) of household bleach into 4 L (1 gallon) of water; or,
 - Mix 5 ml (1 teaspoon) of household bleach into 1 litre (4 cups) of water.

Adapted from: *Food Safety for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and Ten Easy Steps to Make Food Safe*, HealthLink BC

Recommended Resources

- *Do Bugs Need Drugs?* (www.dobugsneeddrugs.org)
- HealthLink BC: Call 811 and speak with a registered dietitian (www.healthlinkbc.ca)

SUGARY DRINKS

This section of the Healthy Eating Overview will explain what is meant by ‘sugary drinks’, provide tips and tools for assessing popular drinks and share information relating to the levels of caffeine found in many of these drinks.

Key Messages

- Some drinks don’t fit into the four food groups in Eating Well with *Canada’s Food Guide* or *Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis*.
- Sugar is a major ingredient in many popular drinks.
- Knowing what is in drinks helps us to make healthy choices.
- The number and size of servings we drink affects the amount of sugar we consume.
- Drinking sugary drinks “bumps out” nutritious drinks.
- Some ingredients in sugary drinks other than sugar, such as acid and caffeine, may damage our health.
- Drink choices can be influenced by various factors, including family, friends, and the media.
- We can decide for ourselves to make healthy drink choices.
- Drink water – it’s always a great choice!

What Are Sugary Drinks?

Added Sugars



Sugary drinks are drinks (carbonated or not) that contain added sugars. These can include:

- Pop or soft drinks
- Energy drinks
- Hot chocolate
- Store-bought smoothies
- Slushes
- Fruity drinks (e.g., “punches”, “cocktails”, or “ades”)
- Sports drinks
- Flavoured or vitamin-enhanced waters

Added sugars are sugars and syrups that are added to drinks or food during processing (e.g. sugars added to soda by the manufacturer) or preparation (e.g., sugars added to a cup of coffee after it was bought at the coffee shop). Sugary drinks often have little to no nutritional value. For examples, children and adolescents who drink pop regularly are more likely to have lower intakes of calcium and other nutrients.

Sugary drinks are heavily marketed, available in many locations, and often displayed at the eye level of children. These drinks can contribute to unhealthy weight, which puts a child at increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer and other health problems. A healthy weight, on the other hand, supports the mental, physical and social health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Naturally Occurring Sugars

Naturally occurring sugars are no different from added sugars in terms of their effects on the body. However, because drinks with naturally occurring sugars often contain important nutrients, they can be consumed in moderation as part of healthy eating. Some drinks with naturally occurring sugar are 100% fruit juice (contains fructose), and plain milk (contains lactose).

Hidden Sugars

Hidden sugars are other names for added sugars that might not sound or look like sugar. These include: sucrose, dextrose, maltose, galactose, liquid glucose-fructose, invert sugar, raw cane sugar, brown sugar, corn sweetener, high-fructose corn syrup, rice syrup, fruit juice concentrates, honey, malt syrup, and molasses.

Juice and Fruity Drinks

The difference between 100% fruit juices and “fruity drinks” (e.g., “fruit beverages”, “fruit drinks”, “fruit cocktails”) can be a difficult concept for students to grasp, but is a very important teaching point. Although the majority of added sugar consumed by students often comes from these drinks, they – and often their parents – may not know the difference between 100% fruit juice and fruity drinks.

100% fruit juice contains some of the natural vitamins (such as vitamin C, potassium and B-vitamins) found in fruit. However, fruit juice still contains a lot of concentrated sugar, and has the same effect on teeth as other sugary drinks. For this reason, children should have no more than 1 serving (125ml, 1/2 cup) of 100% fruit juice daily. A healthier alternative to 100% fruit juice would be a glass of water and a piece of fresh fruit, which provides all the vitamins, minerals, and fibre naturally present, but with much less sugar. Juice is not a necessary part of a healthy diet. Fruits and vegetables are!

What About Artificial Sweeteners?



In keeping with the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools*, drinks sweetened with artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium and sucralose are not allowed for sale in elementary and middle schools. Just like sugary drinks, artificially sweetened drinks get children used to sweet-tasting, non-nutritious items. They provide none of the nutrients that a child’s growing body needs to be healthy and strong, and can bump healthy foods and drinks out of a child’s diet. These drinks may also contain artificial sweeteners in amounts that exceed the acceptable daily intake (ADI) for children.

Energy Drinks

Energy drinks contain as much or more added sugar than cola, are high or very high in caffeine, and often contain potentially harmful additives. Energy drinks are often marketed with images of extreme sports such as

competitive downhill skiing, biking, snowboarding and skateboarding, with the implication that these drinks boost performance. Others, with flashy packaging and enticing names are designed to directly target the youth market.

Energy drinks are very high not only in sugar, but also in caffeine. For example, a 500mL can of a typical energy drink contains 160mg of caffeine. That is more than double the suggested daily caffeine maximum for a 7-12 year-old child.

Many energy drinks also contain stimulant herbs or other substances such as guarana and taurine. These additives are often listed misleadingly as “medicinal ingredients” on energy drinks, when in fact they are untested and potentially harmful, especially for children. Like sports drinks, energy drinks also tend to contain artificial flavours and/or colours.

When consumed in large amounts, or when combined with alcohol, energy drinks have been linked to serious health effects such as irregular heart function, nausea and vomiting, and electrolyte disturbances. Energy drinks can also interact with some medications.⁷

Milk, Flavoured Milk and Other Beverages Made With Milk

Milk and milk alternatives (e.g. unsweetened fortified soy beverage) are the main source of calcium and Vitamin D in most Canadian diets. Both calcium and vitamin D help build and maintain strong bones and teeth. Plain milk is also a source of protein, vitamin A and riboflavin.

One cup (250mL) of plain milk = 1 serving from the Milk and Alternatives food group in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* and in *Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis*. Children aged 4-13 should aim for 2 to 4 Food Guide Servings of Milk and Alternatives each day.

Adding vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and other flavours to plain milk can add a lot of extra sugar. It is best to offer children plain (not flavoured) milk regularly so they learn to enjoy it. If making flavoured milk at home, add a small amount of syrup or powder. Less is best.

Drink water – it's always a great choice!

7. SipSmart! BC™ <http://www.bcpeds.ca/Programs/sipsmart.aspx?MenuID=3347>

Amount of Sugar in Popular Drinks

This chart provides a visual description of the average amount of sugar found in many popular drinks.

DRINK	# OF CUBES OR TEASPOONS OF SUGAR	
Water (250 ml)	0	
Plain Milk (250 ml)	3	 naturally occurring lactose
Chocolate soy beverage (250 ml)	5	
100% Orange Juice (200 ml)	5	 naturally occurring fructose
Chocolate milk (250 ml)	6	
Iced tea (355 ml)	10	
Citrus-C (fruit flavoured drink) (355 ml)	10	
Sports drink (700 ml)	10	
Energy drink (500 ml)	14	
Cola (591 ml)	17	
Iced mocha (500 ml)	20	
Sweetened bubble tea (500 ml)	21	
Lime Blast Slushie (1000 ml)	24	

Adapted from: Sip Smart! BC™

Remember:

- Sugary drinks are beverages that have sugar or sugary syrups added to them.
- Sugary drinks provide little or no nutritional value and take the place of healthier choices like water or milk.
- 1 teaspoon (tsp) of sugar = 4 grams of sugar = 1 sugar cube

Caffeine

In addition to sugar and acid, many sugary drinks contain large amounts of caffeine.

Caffeine is a mildly addictive stimulant drug that stimulates the central nervous system and can cause side effects including: irritability and restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and an increased need to urinate.

Caffeine occurs naturally in some drinks (coffee, tea and hot chocolate) and is added to others (cola and energy drinks).

Nutrition Facts Tables rarely include the amount of caffeine contained in a food product.

Some of the ingredients indicating the presence of caffeine in a food or drink include: coffee or coffee beans, green or black tea leaves, guarana, yerba/yerba mate, and cocoa beans.

Health Canada recommends that children aged 4-6 get no more than 45mg each day, children aged 7-9 get no more than 62.5 mg and children 10-12 get no more than 85mg of caffeine each day, as even low levels of caffeine can affect most children's behaviour. Withdrawal symptoms may be felt by children consuming even small amounts of caffeine. Symptoms might include headaches, irritability and restlessness.

Sip Smart! BC™

Sip Smart! BC™ is a resource that fits with the Grade 4-6 Physical and Health Education curriculum to help teach students about sugary drinks and healthy drink choices. It aims to raise awareness among Grade 4, 5 and 6 school children in BC of the negative health effects associated with the consumption of sugary drinks, and provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy drink choices.

The BC Paediatric Society has provided a complete print package of Sip Smart! BC™ to all schools with Grades 4-6, via their principal. This includes a colourful, ready-to-use set of materials (2 posters, 16 laminated cut-outs and a class set of 30 booklets for parents), and the materials are designed to last for several years – and can be shared for a long time amongst Grade 4-6 teachers.

The majority of information in this section was adapted from Sip Smart! BC™.

Recommended Resources

- Healthy Families BC (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sugary-drinks)
- Sip Smart! BC™ (<http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/298/sip-smart-bc>)
- BC Ministry of Education: *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* (F) (<http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/395/guidelines-for-food-and-beverage-sales-in-bc-schools>)
- Canadian Paediatric Society: *Caring for Kids* (www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
- Health Canada – *Caffeine in Food* (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/addit/caf/food-caf-aliments-eng.php)

References

- BC Paediatric Society, Sip Smart! BC™ (<http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/298/sip-smart-bc>)
- Health Canada (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>)
- HealthLink BC (<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating>)
- OSNPPH, *Sip Smart! Ontario Teacher Resource Guide*, 2016 (adapted)
- Healthy Families BC (<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sugary-drinks>)

SODIUM

This section will explain why it is important to look at how much sodium is in the foods we consume.

Key Messages

- Sodium is a mineral found in salt.
- All types of salt are high in sodium.
- Most of us eat too much sodium; more than double the amount we need. Healthy children only need 1000-1500 mg of sodium per day; healthy adults only need 1500 mg of sodium per day.
- Food labels can help you make healthy food choices.
- Over 75% of sodium we eat comes from processed foods such as cheese, deli meats, pizza, sauces and soups.
- Pre-packaged foods, ready-to-eat foods, fast foods, and restaurant meals are often high in sodium.

Reference: Healthy Families BC (<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium>)

Why Sodium?

When children consume too much sodium, they develop a preference for high sodium foods, which results in less healthy choices throughout their life. Teaching children about salt or sodium and creating an environment where lower salt choices are readily available supports their health and learning.

Sodium is found in salt (sodium chloride) and other products like baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), monosodium glutamate (MSG), and sodium nitrite/nitrate, which is used for curing meat. It is the sodium in salt which can be harmful to our health.

The Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools include sodium as one of the criteria for classifying foods into groups that determine whether the food or beverages can be sold to students in public schools.

Eating too much sodium can be harmful to your health.

Adapted from: Sodium 101 (<http://www.sodium101.ca/>)

Recommended Resources

- Healthy Families BC (www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium)
- Sodium 101 (www.sodium101.ca)
- Dietitians of Canada – Sodium Sense (<http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Blood-Pressure/Sodium-Sense-factsheets.aspx>)

MEDIA AWARENESS

This section will explain the efforts of industry to market to children and youth. It will provide some insight into how marketing of unhealthy food and drinks affects the choices of children and youth, and will also speak to the Action Schools! BC resource, *Being Me*.

Marketing is much more than advertising. It includes a wide array of tactics companies use to promote their products, such as: attractive packaging, celebrity endorsements, product placements in movies, cartoons or popular TV shows, sponsorship of kids' sports teams and programs, widespread logo placement, and embedding products, brands or logos within games, videogames or websites.⁸

Children are uniquely vulnerable to marketing. Before age five, most children cannot distinguish ads from unbiased programming. Those under eight do not understand the intent of marketing messages and believe what they see. By 10 to 12, children understand that ads are designed to sell products, but they are not always able to be critical of these ads. Given that marketers are aiming to capitalize on children's influence on their own food and drink decisions, it is important that children are given the tools to begin to understand the role of marketing, along with recognition of daily examples of marketing in their own lives.

Marketing directed at children is everywhere. Teaching media awareness to children is one method for helping them understand and evaluate the techniques used by marketers to influence their food and beverage choices. The development of these critical thinking skills is the starting point to empowering children with the knowledge they need to make informed choices that support positive mental and physical health and development.

Key Messages

- Media awareness helps students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to make informed choices in all areas of their lives.
- Marketers spend billions of dollars creating campaigns and advertisements targeted towards children.
- 61% of popular children's websites market unhealthy food and beverages, and as much as 90% of food and beverages marketed on TV are high in salt, fat, sugar or calories.⁹
- Food and beverage marketing has an impact on the foods children eat, their food preferences and beliefs, rising rates of childhood obesity, and increased risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.
- Children influence their parents' spending, have their own money to spend, and will eventually become adult consumers.

8. <http://stopmarketingtokids.ca/what-is-marketing-2/>

9. <http://stopmarketingtokids.ca/the-health-context/>

Why Media Awareness?

We are all exposed to a myriad of media experiences, so much so that it has become part of daily life – and largely goes unnoticed, except subconsciously. Statistics Canada reported that the time spent watching TV is decreasing but the time spent on the internet has risen substantially. As new forms of mobile media are introduced, the potential to have both positive and negative effects on the health of children and youth expands. The opportunities for media to have a positive impact on health include access to new information, improving education for more people especially in remote areas, and providing a platform for more people to communicate with each other on important topics.

Marketing influences children’s food and beverage choices and preferences, and therefore their health and development. Media directed at children is everywhere: TV, websites, sponsorships, product placements (e.g. food in movies, candy at grocery store checkouts), clothing, online games for children, cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, contests, free toys and clubs.

Many factors influence food choices, including taste, price, availability, family meal patterns, peers, nutrition, and food marketing. Most of the marketed foods and beverages are for products high in fat, sugar and salt, which include candy, pop, fast foods, and salty snacks.

Adapted from: Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition and Media Awareness Network

Promoting Healthy Body Image

Being Me: Promoting Positive Body Image – K to 9 is a resource, available at www.actionschoolsbc.ca/resources, with lessons and activities that are designed to support the development of healthy body image and self-esteem, along with messaging which serves to help prevent disordered eating. It can be beneficial to deliver the lessons from both resources around the same time.

Key Messages

- Consider your values, beliefs, and choice of language about body weight and health.
- Promote healthy activities for every body size.
- Role model positive body image and a healthy lifestyle.
- When you discuss bullying in your classroom, include the topic of teasing individuals for their body weight, shape, or size.
- Teach students how to look at the media and information in it more critically. Often, unrealistic images of beauty are linked with happiness, love, popularity and acceptance.
- Avoid using weight tables or charts and calorie counting in classroom activities. Relying on the number of calories rather than on internal cues of hunger and fullness can lead to over or under eating.
- It is normal for many children to gain weight in advance of a period of rapid growth during puberty. Girls usually have their major growth spurt at 12.5 to 13 years, while boys have theirs at 14 to 14.5 years. Note that these are averages; the rapid growth period varies greatly based on genetics and environmental factors.
- Each person’s body is different and we should respect, accept and celebrate these differences.

Recommended Resources

- Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition (www.stopmarketingtokids.ca)
- Dietitians of Canada – *Advertising of Food and Beverages to Children: Position of Dietitians of Canada*. December 2010 Marketing to children www.dietitians.ca/marketingtokids)
- Long Live Kids (www.longlivekids.ca)
- Media Smarts (www.mediasmarts.ca)

References

- Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition - www.stopmarketingtokids.ca
- Statistics Canada 2004
- The Kaiser Family Foundation, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds* - www.kff.org
- Gantz W, Schwartz N, Angelini JR, Rideout V. *Food for thought: Television Food Advertising to Children in the United States*. A Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2007