Water in the Media

Grades 6-8

Overview

This lesson is designed to explore the role of water in the body, and help students recognize the importance of drinking fluids (hydration) for many functions of the body. This lesson also examines media influences on drinking beverages, and how students can use the information they learn to educate their peers about the importance of hydration.

What Students Will Learn

- Students will explore the many functions of water in the human body.
- Students will identify the importance of hydration from water and other beverages.
- Students will examine the portrayal of beverages in the media and how it can influence choices.

Time

- 30 minutes - 1 hour (varies by grade level and whether extension activities are included)

Materials

- Pencil and Pen
- Media Campaign Planning Tool
- Eating Water Activity Sheet (Grade 6 – optional)

Curricular Links

- Physical & Health Education
- Science
- English Language Arts

BC Curriculum Competencies 6-8

- Identify factors that influence beverage choices
- Assess and communicate health information
- Make observations aimed at identifying their own questions about the natural world
- Identify questions to answer or problems to solve through scientific inquiry
- Develop, and create engaging and meaningful literary and informational texts for a variety of purposes and audiences

TEACHING TIP

Canada's food guide promotes water as the drink of choice but also recognizes other nutrient-rich beverages, such as milk and fortified soy beverage, as hydration options. However, it is important to be neutral about drink choices because many factors influence students' access to and preference for different beverages.

Instead of focusing on beverages to avoid, focus on recognizing thirst cues and why it is important to stay hydrated (e.g. all the roles that fluid plays in the body).

Water in the Media Activities

1. Discuss as class that the human body is made up of more than 60% water and the importance of water in the body. For example, blood, that contains water, carries oxygen to all the cells of your body. Water is also in lymph, a fluid that is part of the immune system, which helps you fight off illness. Water helps prevent overheating (through sweat), digest food and get rid of waste. When we are hydrated, or when our body has enough water to function properly, it can do the things it needs to do.

2. Every day we need to drink water and beverages to replenish the water our body loses through sweating, going to the bathroom, and moisture (water) when we breathe out. Have students brainstorm how they might know they haven't had enough fluids during the day and why staying hydrated is important.

Educator prompts:

- Do you think you have more or less energy if you are hydrated?
- Do you think your brain works better or worse when you are hydrated?
- Do you think it's easier or harder to become dehydrated in hot weather? Why?
- How do you know you haven't had enough fluids during the day? How does it make you feel?

3. Discuss ways to stay hydrated with drinking water and other beverages (e.g. consider how it is important to listen to your body's cues of thirst, drink more during warmer weather or when doing activities that make us sweat a lot, and drinking beverages with meals and snacks).

4. As a class, have students consider and discuss how different beverages are advertised and marketed and the influence that such media messaging has on beverages choices (e.g. the ad talks about the flavour or the refreshing nature of the beverage, that the water comes from a pure mountain spring, what celebrities/athletes drink to be successful, or the health benefits).

5. Use the Media Campaign Planning Tool activity sheet to have students (working in pairs or groups) draft a media campaign to educate their peers about the importance of hydration. Encourage students to draw on specific lesson learning and discussion points (if time permits, review the MediaSmarts –Media Literacy 101 suite of short videos for students on key concepts of media literacy with your students beforehand).

Note for Navigating Water Talk: Be sensitive to and respectful of your students' diverse experiences and their community, family, socioeconomic and cultural contexts, and the influence these factors have on beverage access and choice (including, for example, pop, fruit drinks, and bottled water). For tips to help you navigate issues related to the inherently sensitive topic of food and nutrition, visit teachfoodfirst.ca.

Grade Specific Considerations:

- **Grade 6:** Expand the dialogue about staying hydrated by including a discussion about getting water from the foods we eat (e.g. many foods we eat contain water and can help hydrate our body). Have students complete the Eating Water Matching Activity and follow-up with a discussion considering and describing traits of foods that have higher versus lower water content (e.g. texture, storage, preparation for eating).
- **Grade 7:** Expand the discussion about the importance of water for staying hydrated by having students reflect on the pros and cons of tap water vs. bottled water (e.g. convenience, waste, availability, cost, safety). Split the class into pairs or groups of "pros" or "cons" and have them present or debate to the class (review Water Fluoridation Facts and/or Drinking Water Chlorination Facts if these points come up).
- **Grade 8:** Have students consider that not all people or communities have access to safe drinking water. Get students to research Drinking Water Advisories (e.g. boil water advisories, do not consume advisories) and consider: What does it mean when communities are under these advisories (for drinking and non-drinking uses)? What are some of the reasons for these types of advisories? Are there groups of people who are more impacted by these advisories? What beverage alternatives do these communities have?

Extension Activities

- Have students use their planning tool ideas to create and share their media campaign.
- Build on the Eating Water Matching Activity (for Grade 6): As a class or in groups, weigh (optional) and then seal together in an airtight container, a piece of food that has high moisture content and a piece of food with low moisture content e.g. corn flakes and dried cranberries; crackers and cut fruit; hardened brown sugar and a soft biscuit; clumped salt and dried rice grains. After a few days, have students weigh, observe and discuss how each of the foods have changed and why (e.g. what has been the effect on food weight, texture and appearance; how might the changes affect the food's use).

Additional Resources

- Teach Food First: An Educator's Toolkit for Exploring Canada's Food Guide
- Short TED-Ed video: What would happen if you didn't drink water?
- Drinking Water Advisories; Ending Long-Term Drinking Water Advisories; Book: Search for Clean Water

Media Campaign Planning Tool

Reflect on the questions in the left column to generate ideas in the right column for your campaign to educate your peers about the importance of hydration.

Questions	Campaign Ideas to Educate Peers About the Importance of Hydration
Media type What type of media will you use (e.g. print, video, social media, audio)?	
Target audience What group of people are you trying to influence with your media campaign?	
Overall message What is the key message or story you want your target audience to take away from your campaign?	
Objective What specific goal do you hope to achieve with your campaign?	
Title or slogan What is the main title or catchy phrase that draws attention to this media sample?	
Images What types of images will you use to get attention and communicate meaning to your target audience (e.g. pictures, graphs, colours)?	
Other content What other specific things do you plan to say to your audience to help get your message across?	
Method of delivery How will you make sure your campaign is seen or heard by your target audience?	

Eating Water Matching Activity

Fill in the blank with the food that matches the percent water content of the food.

Cooked corn	_____ is 90-99% water
Biscuits	_____ is 80-89% water
Bread	_____ is 70-79% water
Cooked squash	_____ is 60-69% water
Ground Beef	_____ is 50-59% water
Nuts	_____ is 40-49% water
Pizza	_____ is 30-39% water
Raisins	_____ are 20-29% water
Salmon	_____ are 10-19% water
Yogurt	_____ are 0-9% water

Eating Water Matching Activity - Answer Key

Cooked Squash is 90-99% water

Yogurt is 80-89% water

Cooked corn is 70-79% water

Salmon is 60-69% water

Ground Beef is 50-59% water

Pizza is 40-49% water

Bread is 30-39% water

Biscuits are 20-29% water

Raisins are 10-19% water

Nuts are 0-9% water

Source: Popkin BM, D'Anci KE, Rosenberg IH. Water, Hydration and Health. Nutr Rev. 2010;68(8):439-458. doi:10.1111/j.1753-4887.2010.00304.x
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