

The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, Health and Physical Education:

Healthy Living Strand – Healthy Eating Component

The Healthy Eating component of the Healthy Living Strand in the 1998 Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Grades 1-8) summarizes the knowledge and skills students will gain as they progress through the grade levels.

Topics related to healthy eating include nutrition, disordered eating, body image, and dental health. Students require knowledge to make healthy eating choices. Using this knowledge, they will examine their own food choices and eating patterns, and then make wise decisions and set appropriate goals. In later grades, students will learn more about the factors that affect healthy body weight, and will increase their understanding of a healthy body image. Throughout the healthy living strand, the importance of healthy eating and regular physical activity is emphasized (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998).

Purpose of this Resource

The purpose of this resource is the following:

- To support the implementation of the document *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education, 1998*
- To assist the teachers to design a balanced instructional program with a broad selection of activities to address the learning needs of the students
- To increase nutrition knowledge and skills and to increase understanding of how healthy eating relates to growth and development
- To use *Canada's Food Guide* as the key teaching tool for developing healthy eating patterns
- To promote lifelong healthy eating habits

Using this Resource

The Overall and Specific Expectations for Healthy Eating form the basis of this resource. For each Specific Expectation, a menu of activities is outlined to provide teachers with choices when designing their instructional strategy to meet the Curriculum and the different student needs within the classroom. To enhance and support the teachers' knowledge base, Background Information, Glossary, and Additional Resources are included.

Why Teach about Healthy Eating?

As children grow they learn to make decisions and begin to make more choices on their own. They develop viewpoints and habits that form the foundation of their behaviours in adulthood. Many factors influence decisions of children and youth, including family, peers, adults who work with them, media, and school policies and practices. Teachers are important role-models in teaching students about healthy behaviours.

The *Curriculum* provides an ideal avenue for children and youth to explore the topics of food, nutrition, eating patterns, dental health and body image. Through various learning activities, students will become more knowledgeable and aware of the influence their own eating patterns have on their health and well being. In turn, students will increase their confidence in making health-enhancing decisions.

Issues and Concerns

Children are NOT eating enough nutritious foods:

- 7 out of 10 children aged 4 to 8 do not meet the minimum of 5 servings of vegetables and fruit daily (Garriguet, 2004).
- At ages 9 to 13, the figures are 62% for girls and 68% for boys (Garriguet, 2004).
- 1/3 of children aged 4 to 9 do not have the minimum recommended 2 daily servings of milk products daily (Garriguet, 2004).
- By ages 10 to 16, 61% of boys and 83% of girls do not meet their recommended minimum of 3 daily servings of milk products (Garriguet, 2004).
- 22% of boys and 33% of girls in grade 6 do not eat breakfast on all five weekdays. The proportion of students who don't eat breakfast increases with grade level. (Boyce, 2004)
- Research suggests that breakfast skipping affects children's ability to perform cognitive tasks, especially those involving memory. How much these effects are modified by age, sex, nutritional status, timing, size and composition of the morning meal is unknown (Pollitt et al, 1998).

Less healthy choices are displacing nutritious foods:

- For children aged 9 to 13, 22.6% of all calories come from foods that are not in Canada's Food Guide's 4 food groups. (Garriguet, 2004)
- 38% of boys and 36% of girls in grade 6 eat candy or chocolate 5 days a week or more. In grade 8, 46% of boys and 43% of girls eat sweets at least 5 days a week (Boyce, 2004).
- Approximately 1/3 of Ontario students in grades 4 to 8 consume soft drinks daily (Evers et al., 2001).

Children are NOT active:

- Over half of children ages 5 to 17 were not active enough to support optimal growth and development (CFLRI, 2000). Girls were less active than boys.

- Children aged 6 to 11 with more than 2 hours of screen time each day were twice as likely to be overweight/obese as were those whose daily viewing totaled 1 hour or less (Shields, 2005).
- A significant number of males and females between the ages of 10 and 14 are trying to lose weight or build muscle, despite being a healthy weight (McVey et al, 2002).
- Research is accumulating that shows that dietary and lifestyle modifications begun in childhood are likely to have benefits later in life (Deckelbaum, 1999).

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