

Healthy Choices

A Newsletter for Canadians about Heart-Smart Health

Volume 2, Issue 1

Active living for kids and teenagers

Children and adolescents need physical activity. Being active helps young people build strong bones and strengthen muscle, maintain their flexibility, promote good posture and balance, improve fitness and strengthen the heart. It can also help young people maintain a healthy body weight, improve their physical self-esteem, and increase relaxation.⁵

Yet despite all of these benefits, the Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that only half of Canadian boys and girls are active enough for healthy growth and development.⁵

How much activity is enough?

The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that young people engage in at least 90 minutes of physical activity per day.⁵ This does not have to be 90 minutes of sports; it can include activities such as hiking, cycling and walking, or household chores that require a lot of energy, like carrying groceries, mopping or mowing the lawn.

How to get the ball rolling

The best way to get started is slowly and steadily. Every day, trade in 30 minutes of non-active time (like reading, watching TV, or playing video or computer games) for 30 minutes of active time. Repeat this trade-off every month and soon you'll be up to 90 minutes per day.⁵

Fitting activity into every day

Activity can fit into every day, no matter how busy everyone's schedules are. It may involve walking or biking to school or to friends' houses instead of driving. It could be participating in household chores such as bringing in the groceries, clearing snow or raking leaves. For younger children, games like tag, hide and seek, or a treasure hunt are all fun ways to be active.⁵ Teenagers could incorporate walking into their trips to the mall or out shopping, or could organize outdoor activities with their friends as an alternative to movies or video games.

Being a supportive parent - and an active role model

Encouraging our children to be physically active can be a good reminder that we need to be physically active ourselves. Be an active role model by inviting your kids to join you for sports or outdoor activities.⁵ Consider what activities might be appealing to them: they might want to join the same clubs or teams that their friends play with, or try courses in activities that may be unknown to you, such as contemporary dance, yoga or martial arts. Help your kids to set goals, and recognize and praise their accomplishments.

Did You Know?

36% of Canadian children aged 6 to 11 spend more than 2 hours a day in front of a TV or computer²



35% of Canadian adolescents aged 12 to 17 spend 30 or more hours per week in front of a TV or computer²



Over the past 25 years the rate of children and adolescents who are overweight has more than doubled and the rate of obesity has tripled²

References:

1. Health Canada. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, focus on children six to twelve years: Background for educators and communicators. Accessible on-line at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/focus_child-focaliser_enfant_e.pdf. Last accessed February 3, 2006. 2. Statistics Canada. Measured obesity: overweight Canadian children and adolescents. In: *Nutrition: Findings from the Canadian Community Health Survey*, Catalogue No. 82-620-MWE. 3. Health Canada. Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) 2004 Annual Web Summary. Available on-line at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/hecs-sesc/pdf/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/ctums-esutc/2004/table-2004-summ_e.pdf. Last accessed February 3, 2006. 4. Health Canada. Rewards of Quitting. Available on-line at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/quit-cesser/ready-prep-reward-gratifiant/index_e.html. Last accessed February 3, 2006. 5. Public Health Agency of Canada. Family Guide to Physical Activity for Children (6-9 years of age). Available on-line at: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child_youth/pdf/KidsFamguideEnFINAL.pdf. Last accessed February 3, 2006.

This booklet has been created as educational and support material. It is not intended to replace the advice of a physician or other healthcare professionals. Your doctor is your best resource for information on cardiovascular health in young people.



© 2006
Pfizer Canada Inc.
Kirkland, Quebec
H9J 2M5



06NV18E

Get a Jump-Start on Good Heart Health

Most people do not consider their heart health until they are well into their adult years. But making heart-smart choices is something everyone can start thinking about from a young age. The habits we form in childhood and adolescence will last a lifetime. This is why it's important for young people to understand the benefits of good nutrition and regular exercise, and the hazards associated with smoking.

If you are a young person reading this newsletter, congratulations on having such a mature interest in healthy choices!

If you are a parent reading this newsletter for or with your child, thank you for taking an active role in helping to maintain your family's heart health. For more information on any of the subjects that you read about here, speak with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, and consult the following sources:

• On good nutrition:

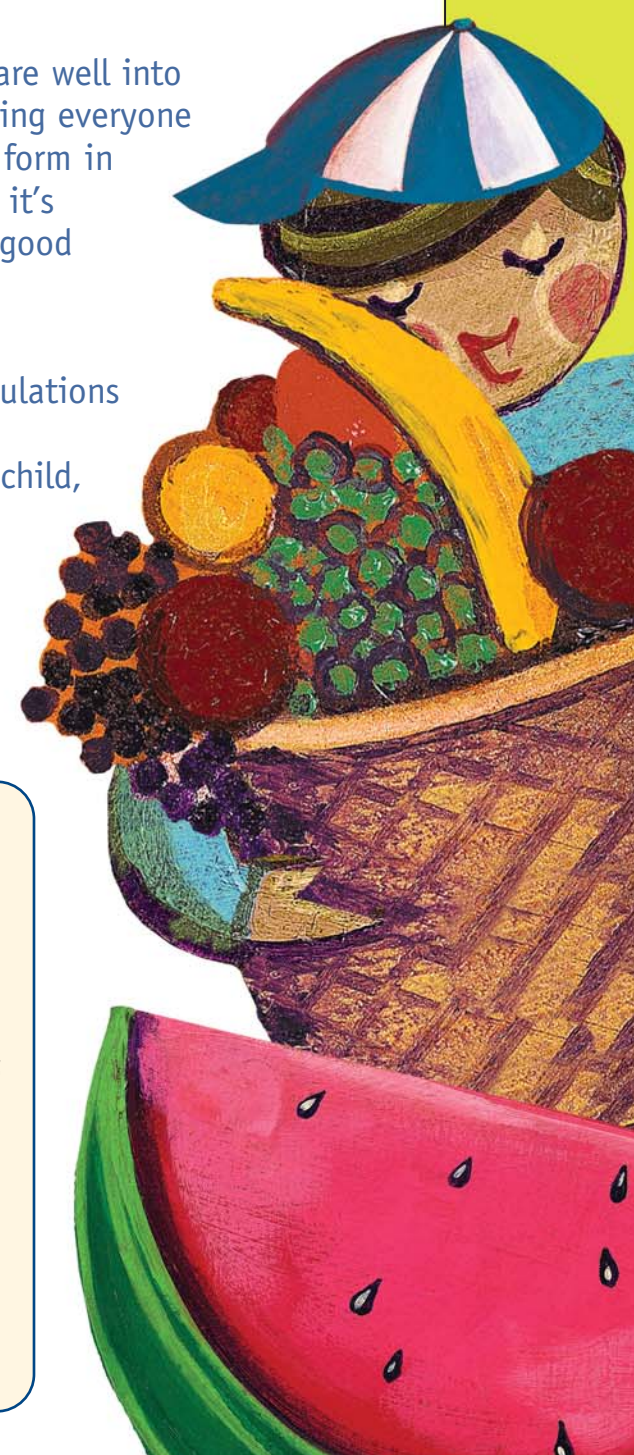
Health Canada offers information on *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, including frequently asked questions about the guide, on their website: www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide.

• On quitting smoking:

Health Canada has devoted an entire website to the subject of smoking among young people: www.quit4life.com. The site contains facts on smoking and guidelines on how to quit.

• On physical activity:

The Public Health Agency of Canada is an excellent source of information on physical activity for children, youth and their parents. Call 1-888-344-9769 or visit their website (www.healthcanada.ca/paguide) in order to obtain Family Guides to Physical Activity for children and youth, the *Gotta Move!* interactive magazine for children or the *Let's Get Active!* interactive magazine for youth, or a physical activity chart and activity stickers for children.



Healthy Choices for Kids and Teenagers

Good nutrition: You are what you eat

Learning about good nutrition is an essential part of being heart-smart. Following a healthy diet involves eating the right *kind* of food as well as the right *amount* of food. Most young people know that a healthy diet is essential to maintaining a healthy body weight; however, good nutrition will also help to ensure healthy development of: bones, teeth and muscle, as well, it will help to keep the immune system strong, and provide lots of energy for school, sports and play.

Which foods do we like, and why?

Adults may be motivated to eat foods that they know have good nutritional value. However, children and teenagers are more likely to want to eat foods that taste good, are fun to eat, that their friends eat and that they see in the media.¹ Work through Exercise #1 as a first step in thinking about nutrition.

Variety is the spice of life

A healthy diet is one that involves a variety of nutritious foods. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* (see the insert in this newsletter) uses a rainbow to show which foods fall into the four food groups: grain products, vegetables and fruits, milk products, and meat and alternatives. It also shows how many servings from each food group are recommended per day.¹ How does your diet compare with the *Food Guide*?

Did You Know?

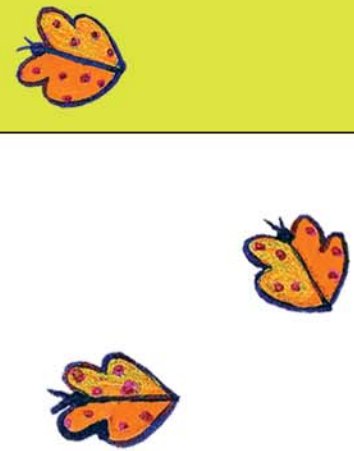
59% of Canadian children and adolescents consume less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day²



26% of Canadian children and adolescents aged 2 to 17 are overweight or obese²



Children and adolescents who ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day were substantially less likely to be overweight or obese²



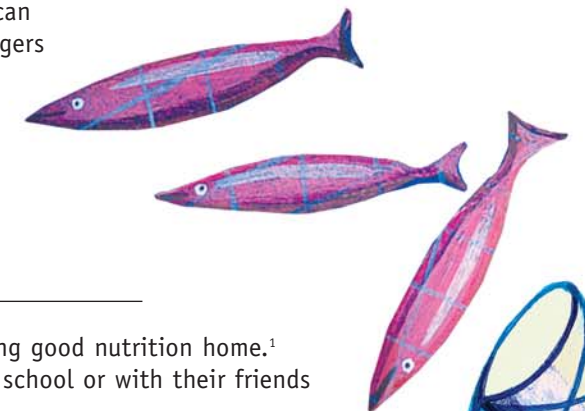
Rethinking “good” and “bad” food

We tend to refer to foods as either “good for you” or “bad for you”. However, using the terms “good” and “bad” will not help create a positive approach to eating. It can be more helpful for kids and teenagers to think of foods as being “everyday” foods and “sometimes” foods.¹

Exercise #3

Ask your children, or if you are a young person, ask yourself:

- Which of the foods you listed in Exercise #1 are “everyday” foods and which are “sometimes” foods?



How to bring healthy food choices home

There are a variety of easy ways that parents can help bring good nutrition home.¹

- Talk to your children. Ask what foods they like to eat at school or with their friends and encourage them to learn about good nutrition.
- Understand what’s in your food. Some products that are advertised as “light” or “healthy” can actually have quite a lot of sugar or fat. Read the label for nutritional information.
- Lead by example. If parents have a healthy diet, their children will automatically learn to eat healthily.
- Encourage healthy snacks. Fruits and vegetables, whole-wheat bread with cheese or peanut butter, plain popcorn and yogurt are all fast, healthy snacks.
- Don’t forget water. Children need to rehydrate; especially when they are playing actively. When children ask for a drink, avoid serving soft drinks or fruit drinks that contain a high amount of sugar.



Smoking: Why cigarettes need to butt out

Smoking is extremely harmful to your health, even if you only smoke a few cigarettes or a few puffs of cigarette a week. Some young people try smoking for different reasons, but the good news is that the vast majority of Canadians aged 15 to 19 - 82% do not smoke.³

If you are a parent, the best way to prevent your children from smoking is by setting a good example and not smoking yourself. If your children admit to you that they smoke, try to recognize the courage it must have taken for them to tell you, and be supportive of their attempts to quit.

If you smoke, consider quitting. You are probably aware of the health risks associated with smoking, such as the risk of cancer, heart disease and breathing problems. However, many people are unaware that smoking is related to other health risks as well, such as a risk of sexual dysfunction in men. Smoking also causes cosmetic changes, such as wrinkling, staining the teeth and skin and bad breath. Lastly, smoking is expensive - just think of what could be done with all that money if it wasn’t spent on cigarettes!⁴

