

Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviours: Healthy Habits That Will Last a Lifetime

In Canada, one in three children are overweight or obese (PHAC, 2011). Overweight and obese children are at increased risk for health problems such as diabetes, lung, heart, gut and muscle diseases, depression, low self-esteem and social issues (e.g. bullying) (RNAO, 2005).

What Can You Do?

- ❖ Model and teach children about healthy foods, eating habits and staying active;
- ❖ Send the same healthy messages at home, in schools, daycare, recreation centers;
- ❖ Get involved in organizations that help create and support healthy communities.

Healthy Eating For Children of All Ages

Wise food choices is important for good health in both children and adults. The healthy eating patterns recommended for children, depends on the child's stage of growth and development.

Infants (birth to 2 years)	Children (greater than 2 years)
<p>Health Canada recommends:</p> <p>Birth to 6 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding; • Also give an infant Vitamin D; • First foods should be high in iron. <p>Six months to 2 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued breastfeeding with food; • Foods offered should be high in iron; • Also give Vitamin D (for infants who continue to breastfeed or receive breast milk); • Encourage toddlers to feed themselves with an adult's help; • Foods should be prepared, served and stored safely; • From 1 year of age, children should receive regular meals and snacks that generally follow Canada's Food Guide. 	<p>Canada's Food Guide recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose foods from each of the four food groups; • Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable daily; • Choose fruits and vegetables with little or no added fat, sugar or salt; • Eat fruits and vegetables more often than juice; • Eat grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt; • Drink milk every day (1 or 2%); • Eat lower-fat milk products; • Eat lean meat and alternatives (e.g. beans, lentils, tofu) with little or no added salt or fat; • Drink water often; • Serve small and healthy meals/snacks every day.

Physical Activity for Children of All Ages

Being active helps to prevent childhood obesity. Children thrive in active environments (e.g. play at school, home) with activities that they like to do. This also includes limiting time spent in front of a TV, a computer or playing video games – this is called “screen time”.

Infants, toddlers & pre-school (birth to 4 years)	Children (5 to 11 years)
<p>Infants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should be physically active every day,• Activities include ‘tummy time’, rolling on the floor, reaching and grabbing for toys, and crawling;• Screen time is not recommended. <p>Toddlers and pre-school-aged children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to a total of 2 hours of physical activity every day (any intensity);• Include all kinds of activities in different places such as in daycare, at home and outdoors;• Include activities that develop movement skills;• Screen time should not be more than 1 hour a day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should have at least 1 hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day;• Moderate intensity activities include riding a bike and playground activities;• Should have 3 days of vigorous intensity activities;• Vigorous intensity activities include running and swimming;• Should have 3 days of muscle- and bone-strengthening activities;• Should spend less than 2 hours in front of a TV, computer or playing video games.



References:

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This information fact sheet was developed as a supplement to the RNAO Nursing Best Practice Guideline document for nurses. Its intent is to increase your knowledge and involvement in making decisions about your health. The nursing best practice guideline, *Primary Prevention of Childhood Obesity, Second Edition*, is available for public viewing and free download at www.rnao.ca/bestpractices.