



## Welcome to the Healthy Kids Community Challenge

Our community is one of 45 across Ontario taking part in the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. This program unites communities with a common goal: getting kids healthy across the province. Here is how it works:

- Approximately every 9 months, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care introduces a new theme for the program. These themes relate to 2 key factors associated with healthy kids: physical activity and healthy eating.
- Communities will work with partners in many sectors to rally around each theme. Together, we will develop programs, policies, and environmental supports that support healthy behaviours in kids.



## Introducing Theme 2:

# Water does Wonders

This theme encourages kids and families to reach for water when thirsty. It's the natural, healthy, and free choice. Other healthy options such as plain milk and fortified, unsweetened soy beverages are also encouraged.

Use the Quick Facts below to develop speeches, presentations, media releases, or promotional materials. Pick and choose the facts that will resonate best with your specific audience.



## Quick Facts

### Childhood overweight and obesity

- Almost 30% of Ontario children and youth are overweight or obese<sup>1</sup>.
- Children who are obese have a higher risk of chronic disease and premature death as adults<sup>2</sup>.
- Children and youth who are overweight or obese are more likely to become obese adults. In one study, overweight 2-5 year olds were 4 times as likely to be overweight as adults<sup>3</sup>.
- Obese adults are more likely to have coronary artery disease, a stroke, high blood pressure, breast and colon cancer, type 2 diabetes, gall bladder disease, and osteoarthritis<sup>4</sup>.
- Unhealthy weights can influence self-esteem, social inclusion, and mental health in children and youth<sup>5</sup>.

### Water consumption

- 70% of Canadian children 5-17 years old drink water on a typical day<sup>6</sup>.
- Early dietary preferences are set in a child's first 4 years. This lays the foundation for eating habits later in life. Research has shown that when children are used to drinking water at a young age, they are more likely to drink water later in life<sup>7</sup>.

### Benefits of water consumption

- Water makes up more than half of a child's body weight. It is an essential nutrient<sup>8</sup>.
- Children need lots of water to stay hydrated and keep their bodies working properly. Water regulates the temperatures of the human body. It carries nutrients and oxygen to cells. It cushions organs and joints. It also aids digestion and removes waste<sup>9</sup>.
- Water has no sugar, calories, additives, or caffeine. This makes it the smart choice for sipping throughout the day.
- When kids drink water in place of sugar-sweetened beverages, they are more likely to take in fewer total calories each day<sup>10</sup>.
- Most tap water is fluoridated. This means that it helps teeth stay strong and protects against cavities<sup>11</sup>.
- Lack of water can lead to dehydration. This condition occurs when you don't have enough water in your body to carry out normal functions. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired.



## Sugar-sweetened beverages

Sugar-sweetened beverages have sugars and syrups added to them. They include:

- Soft drinks
- Fruit drinks (e.g. punches, lemonades)
- Specialty coffee/tea drinks
- Sports and energy drinks
- Sweetened milks

## Consumption trends

- From age 4-18, almost 20% of the calories Canadian children and teens consume come from beverages. Younger children take in almost 30% of their calories from beverages<sup>12</sup>.
- Almost half (44%) the sugar children and youth take in every day comes from beverages, specifically:
  - *Milk (20% at ages 1-8; 14% at ages 9-18)*
  - *Fruit juice (15% and 9%)*
  - *Regular soft drinks (4% and 14%)*
  - *Fruit drinks (6% and 7%)*These numbers include naturally occurring sugar in milk and fruit juice<sup>13</sup>, although both these beverages do provide other beneficial vitamins and nutrients.
- As they get older, kids are likely to consume more sugar-sweetened drinks. For example, fewer than 10% of children aged 1-3 had a regular soft drink the day before they completed the Canadian Community Health Survey. At ages 9-13, that number rose to 33% for boys and 29% for girls<sup>14</sup>.
- Calories from fruit drinks and soft drinks come mostly from added sugars.

## Sugar-sweetened beverages and health

- These beverages are the single largest source of sugar in kids' diets<sup>15</sup>.
- Studies show children who drink sugar-sweetened beverages tend to gain more weight<sup>16</sup>.
- One study found that every additional sugar-sweetened beverage per day equals a 60% increase in risk of child becoming obese<sup>17</sup>.
- Sugar-sweetened drinks often replace healthier choices such as vegetables, fruits, and milk. Kids need these foods to grow and be healthy.
- Children and adolescents who drink pop often are more likely to have less calcium and other nutrients in their diets<sup>18</sup>.
- People who drink sugar-sweetened beverages do not feel as full as they do if they eat the same number of calories from solid food<sup>19</sup>.
- As well as gaining weight, kids who drink sugar-sweetened beverages are also more likely to have cavities and other dental problems<sup>20</sup>.
- Studies suggest that sugar intake is linked to the development of type 2 diabetes, even if the person is not obese<sup>21</sup>.
- Research studies suggest that people with more added sugar in their diet have a higher risk of heart disease<sup>22</sup>.
- There is often caffeine in soda and energy drinks. Caffeinated drinks are not recommended for children. When kids drink caffeine, they may get headaches, upset stomach, and disturbed sleep<sup>23</sup>.

# Recommended Guidelines

## Limiting sugar

- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that adults and children get no more than 10% of daily calories from added sugars<sup>24</sup>. The WHO suggests there may be added health benefits when that number drops to below 5%.
- For a child who needs 1,500 calories a day, 10% of those calories equals 150 calories or 36 grams (about 9 teaspoons) of added sugar. A single 355 mL can of sugar-sweetened pop contains up to 40 grams, or about 10 teaspoons, of sugar<sup>25</sup>.

## Healthy alternatives

- Canada's Food Guide encourages young children to drink water to quench their thirst and replenish body fluids.
- After 2 years of age, children can include skim, 1% or 2% milk as part of their daily fluid intake and as a source of calcium and vitamin D. If a child cannot drink milk, fortified, unsweetened soy beverage is a good option<sup>26</sup>.
- 100% juice contains some vitamins and nutrients, but also contains a lot of natural sugar. It should be consumed in moderation. A piece of fruit or vegetable is a healthier choice as it also contains fibre. Children should not have more than one serving of juice per day – about a half cup (125 mL)<sup>27</sup>.

## Breastfeeding

- Research has shown that breastfeeding infants may reduce their risk of obesity<sup>28</sup>.
- Infants should be breastfed exclusively during their first 6 months. Parents are encouraged to continue to breastfeed to the age of 2 (and beyond, if desired)<sup>29</sup>.
- Caregivers should avoid giving infants water unless medically indicated. Juices, cow's milk, and other liquids should also be avoided in infants younger than 12 months<sup>30</sup>.

To learn more about the activities in our community or to get involved, contact your Healthy Kids Community Challenge project manager:

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Name

.....  
email

.....  
Telephone

.....  
Website

Learn more about healthy eating for kids at [Ontario.ca/healthykids](http://Ontario.ca/healthykids)



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