

Bringing Healthy Eating to the Classroom



Why is Healthy Eating Important in the Classroom?



Healthy eating can have a positive impact on academic performance by helping students to be settled, attentive and ready to learn.

Healthy eating can decrease students' risk for chronic disease (heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, some cancers) and obesity.

Obesity puts students at risk for:

- chronic disease
- poor body and self image
- stigmatization
- depression
- decreased quality of life

When students are healthy and succeed in school, they are more likely to have:

- increased job opportunities
- improved economic opportunity
- increased civic engagement, improved physical and mental health

The benefits

When healthy eating is taught in the classroom, students are provided with the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy food choices. A classroom that supports healthy eating helps students to practice what they have learned. The more practice students have making healthy choices, the more likely they will make healthy eating choices outside of school.

Things to keep in mind

Healthy eating strategies are most effective when:

- a Healthy Schools Approach is used
- they are combined with physical activity strategies
- students and parents/caregivers are engaged
- positive self image and self esteem are built into the strategies
- diversity, cost and inequalities are taken into consideration
- they are woven into regular curriculum
- they are carried out for greater than 12 weeks

Support Healthy Eating in the Classroom

- Use non-food rewards (e.g. allow students to sit by friends, read or have class outdoors, enjoy crafts and games)
- Role model healthy eating practices in the classroom
- Create a positive and social eating environment where students enjoy their snacks and meals together
- Allow water bottles at students' desks
- Increase access to fruits and vegetables at no cost (e.g. breakfast/snack program)
- Encourage healthy foods during classroom celebrations
- Post healthy eating messages in the classroom (e.g. student artwork or health department posters)



Healthy Eating and Lesson Plans

By the time students have graduated Grade 12, they will have the knowledge and skills to:

- eat a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods every day
- eat the appropriate amounts from each food grouping listed in the Canada's Food Guide
- choose foods that provide ample amounts of vitamins and minerals
- drink plenty of water
- limit foods and beverages high in added sugar
- limit the intake of fat, avoiding foods with saturated and trans fat
- eat a healthy breakfast every day
- eat healthy snacks
- eat healthy food when dining out
- prepare food in healthy ways (e.g. with little or no added fat, sodium or sugar)
- support others to eat healthy

Tip:

Access healthy eating curriculum resources on durham.ca/schools for quick activities you can do with your class!



Elementary School Activities

Try to include healthy eating while teaching other subjects. Below are some suggestions:

Social Studies:

- Celebrate diversity as it relates to food. Consider discussing healthy foods from various cultural backgrounds
- Label a map of Canada/Ontario to show where foods are produced and discuss when/how they are harvested
- Discuss traditional foods of First Nations and the European settlers to Canada

Science and Technology:

- Create a school vegetable garden or have students grow vegetables in planters (vertical gardens) to learn how plants grow and what is needed for growth
- Plan field trips to farms and orchards
- Discuss how the environment (climate, air, water and soil etc.) impacts the production of crops

Mathematics:

- Have students practice sorting and classifying fruits and vegetables into colours and shapes
- Use nutrition labels on packaged foods and daily recommended intake values to calculate Percent Daily Values

Language:

- Have students complete a healthy eating writing assignment (e.g. news article about their classroom's healthy celebration, create a class cookbook)
- Look for books that talk about healthy eating, cooking or growing vegetables and fruits to read with your class
- Incorporate the names of vegetables and/or fruits into spelling tests and bring in vegetables and/or fruits to talk about how and when they are grown and how they are prepared

The Arts:

- Have students make collages with pictures of food, which are sorted into food groupings
- Have students develop artwork (e.g. posters, paintings) that encourage their peers to eat more vegetables and fruits and display them around the school
- Ask students to create commercials that promote healthy foods (e.g. vegetables) or explain healthy eating skills (e.g. explaining Nutrition Facts Tables)

Health and Physical Education:

- Use Canada's Food Guide to teach students about healthy eating
- Discuss the health benefits of eating vegetables and fruits
- Talk about the influence of the media on food. Ask students to review newspapers/magazines to find food advertisements and write about the impact of these advertisements on food choices. What types of foods are typically advertised?

Secondary School Activities

Try to include healthy eating while teaching other subjects. Below are some suggestions:

Social Studies and Humanities:

- Celebrate diversity as it relates to food. Consider discussing healthy foods from various cultural backgrounds
- Discuss current events related to eating healthy (e.g. menu labelling and sodium)
- Explore the relationship between healthy eating and personal well-being. For example “How could weekly planning of nutritious meals help improve your overall health?”

Science:

- Examine how nutrients and other substances found in foods affect human health and well-being
- Investigate chemical components of energy in food, and the processes by which food is digested
- Investigate the relationship between food and climate change. Students can develop their own plan to reduce their carbon footprint which includes a plan to eat more locally grown foods

Mathematics:

- Integrate healthy eating into math problems:
 - Solve first degree equations using a vegetable garden in the problem
 - Use the Nutrition Facts Table to calculate the amount of sodium consumed when more or less of the serving size is eaten
 - Estimate time needed for planning, shopping and preparing a meal
 - Design and explain a monthly food budget suitable for an individual or family described in a given case study
 - Collect, organize and display data about the number of healthy food choices served in the school cafeteria. Students can then make inferences from the data using a variety of tools and strategies

English and Native Languages:

- Have students interpret simple media texts such as advertisements for fast food outlets and identify some of the indirect messages they suggest
- Have students reflect on their own food choices based on the information and graphics in Canada’s Food Guide
- Empower students to become advocates for their health. For example students could help to:
 - prevent the food industry from targeting students with advertising for unhealthy foods
 - increase awareness about the number of fast food outlets built near schools

The Arts:

- Design art work, sculptures or murals to post in the school or cafeteria about healthy eating
- Design and develop drama works involving healthy eating
- Increase awareness about healthy eating by creating digital storytelling videos that can be shared at assemblies or on televisions throughout the school

Planning Monthly Events

Health and Physical Education:

- Partner with a local nursery to learn about growing fresh vegetables and fruits
- Discuss the health benefits of eating vegetables and fruits and have students identify the relationship between nutrition and chronic diseases
- Link healthy eating messages to what is being served in the cafeteria. Discuss with your students how the School Food and Beverage Policy (P/PM 150) impacts their health

<p>January</p> <p>Make a New Year's resolution to celebrate classroom events with healthy eating options.</p>	<p>February</p> <p>This Valentine's Day, raise money by selling cards instead of candy grams, or celebrate with strawberries.</p>
<p>March</p> <p>March is Nutrition Month! Contact your school's public health nurse to help you plan activities. Visit www.dietitians.ca for Nutrition Month resources.</p>	<p>April</p> <p>April 22 is Earth Day. Celebrate with your class by planting vegetables and fruits in a garden or planter.</p>
<p>May</p> <p>Planning an end of the year trip? Consider healthy eating field trips to learn about local foods in your community.</p>	<p>June</p> <p>Promote water as the drink of choice to keep students hydrated through hot summer days. Be a role model by choosing water too!</p>
<p>July/August</p> <p>Visit durham.ca/schools for ideas on healthy classroom activities and curriculum supports for educators for the upcoming school year.</p>	
<p>September</p> <p>Start off the year by visiting durham.ca/healthyeating or contacting your public health nurse for information and resources.</p>	<p>October</p> <p>For the Thanksgiving holiday, celebrate diversity as it relates to food. Have students discuss healthy food from their cultural backgrounds.</p>
<p>November</p> <p>Have students create a cookbook with healthy recipes they can share with their families.</p>	<p>December</p> <p>Promote healthy food options this holiday season. Visit durham.ca/healthyeating for ideas and recipes.</p>

Notes:



**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**

**Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca/healthyeating**

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

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