

Spring 2008



Healthy Canadians

e-Newsletter



A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO PROVIDING INFORMATION TO FAMILIES TO ENABLE THEM TO LEAD HEALTHIER LIVES AND BUILD HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES.



Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada

Canada

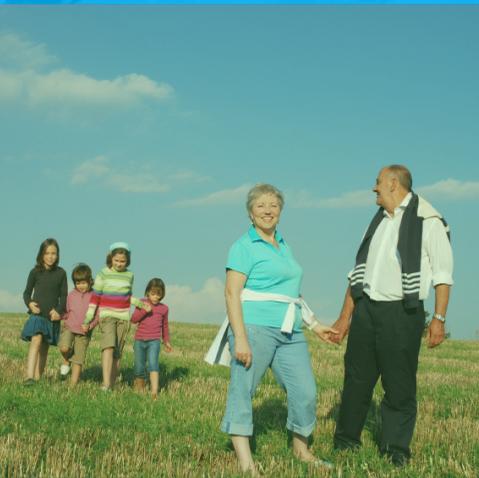
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HEALTHY CANADIANS
E-NEWSLETTER

Welcome!



Health Minister Clement gets WinterActive with a group of kids in Huntsville this winter.



Healthy Canadians Newsletter is published by the Government of Canada. Sponsoring departments include: Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, Canadian Heritage (Sport Canada) and the Canada Revenue Agency.

Please visit www.healthycanadians.ca for the online version of *Healthy Canadians* Newsletter, or for more information and practical tips on healthy eating and physical activity.

Welcome message from the Minister's office

Welcome to the spring issue of *Healthy Canadians*, a newsletter dedicated to providing Canadians with information to help lead healthier lives and build healthier communities. I am pleased to be a part of this effort to bring ideas for healthy living to families across Canada.

Healthy eating, physical activity and sport participation are the simple, core principles to living a healthy life. This issue of *Healthy Canadians* includes a quiz on Canada's food labels to help you make healthier choices when grocery shopping.

Also, make sure to read the article *Kids, Screen Time and Obesity: Is There a Link?* It provides interesting statistics on the increased time youth are spending in front of a computer monitor or TV screen – time that could be spent being active!

Participating in sports and physical activity can sometimes be intimidating, especially if it is not something you have done before. But getting involved does not have to be hard at all. Read an inspiring recount of how easy it can be to get active in your own community in the article *Aboriginal Girls Get in the Game*.

The 2007 taxation time is upon us. When filing your tax claim, do not forget to claim the Children's Fitness Tax Credit for each child (16 or younger) who was enrolled in eligible programs during 2007. More information on this program can be found on the Canada Revenue Agency's Web site at www.cra.gc.ca/fitness.

Healthy living does not have to be difficult, time-consuming or expensive. I encourage you to find simple ways to incorporate healthy eating, physical activity and sport participation into your day.

Even small changes to daily routine can make a big difference to your life and that of your family.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Clement'.

Minister Tony Clement
Minister of Health



How Well Do You Know Your Nutrition Labelling Facts?

The Nutrition Facts table, which is on most pre-packaged foods in our grocery stores, is easy to find and easy to read. Test your Nutrition Facts knowledge with the following true-false quiz:

1. Because the nutrient information is based on a specific amount of food, the key to using the Nutrition Facts table is to compare the amount listed in the table with the amount you actually eat.

True False
2. The Nutrition Facts table helps consumers compare food products and make healthier choices.

True False
3. Some food packages feature nutrition claims such as “very high source of fibre.” As long as these claims are not part of the Nutrition Facts table, manufacturers can make whatever nutrition claims they want on packages.

True False
4. The “% Daily Value” in the Nutrition Facts table, which is based on recommendations for a healthy diet, places all the nutrients on the same scale.

True False
5. “Low in fat” and “reduced in calories” mean the same thing.

True False
6. Everything we need to know about a food product is contained in the Nutrition Facts table.

True False

Resources:

Health Canada’s nutrition labelling Web site has useful information and resources, including an Interactive Nutrition Label and Quiz.

Dieticians of Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Diabetes Association, offers a virtual grocery store tour.

Copies of Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide are available by calling 1-800 O Canada (1-800-622-6232).

For more information, visit www.healthy Canadians.ca.



ANSWERS

1. **True.** The amount listed can be indicated by a phrase or a familiar household unit, such as a slice of bread or a cup of milk, followed by the metric measurement, such as 35 g or 250 mL. So always compare the specific amount in the table with the amount you actually consume.
2. **True.** The nutrients included in the Nutrition Facts are those considered to be the most important to health. Choose foods that contain less saturated fat, trans fat, sugars and sodium. Choose foods that are high in fibre, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron. Compare similar products and look at all of the nutrients together to make the best food choices.
3. **False.** All nutrition claims, which are often in bold lettering on the front of packages, are regulated by Health Canada and must meet wording requirements and other specific criteria. Always check the Nutrition Facts table and the list of ingredients for more information.
4. **True.** The “% Daily Value” makes comparing foods easier because it puts all nutrients on a scale between 0 and 100 percent. Look for a higher percentage for nutrients you want more of, such as fibre and iron, and a lower percentage for those you want less of, such as fats and sodium.
5. **False.** “Low” means a very small amount of something. In this case, a product that is low in fat contains no more than three grams of fat per specific amount (serving size) indicated in the Nutrition Facts table (but keep in mind, the serving could still be very high in the number of calories). “Reduced in calories” means the food contains at least 25 percent fewer calories than that of the food that it is being compared to.
6. **False.** The Nutrition Facts table includes important information about calories and 13 core nutrients for a specified amount of food. The list of ingredients is also a source of valuable information for people who want to avoid certain ingredients or verify the presence of an ingredient in a food.

Kids, Screen Time and Obesity: Is There A Link?

Consider these facts:

- According to Statistics Canada, the percentage of Canadian households with computers rose from 55% in 2000 to 69% in 2004.
- The proportion with Internet access rose from 42% to 60%.
- In 2004, 99% of Canadian households owned a colour TV.
- Obesity rates among children have increased substantially during the past 25 years, according to results from the Canadian Community Health Survey. In 2004, 8 % (an estimated 500,000) of children and youth were obese, compared to 3% in 1978-1979.

Also, consider the following facts from the 2007 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (available at activehealthykids.ca):

- Canadian children aged 10 to 16 are spending 6 hours per day in front of a screen.
- Children and youth report spending twice as much time in front of a screen as they do engaged in physical activity.
- Generally, boys are more physically active than girls.
- Overall levels of physical activity decline as children get older.
- The number of obese children and youth has increased by 35.7% from 2003 to 2006.

Findings also indicate that increased screen time can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, low sense of belonging, and low self-esteem.

Is all this screen time linked to the increases we are seeing in children being overweight and obese? It appears so. Research shows that children aged 6 to 11 who spent



more than two hours in front of a screen per day were twice as likely to be overweight or obese, compared with those who spent one hour or less per day.¹

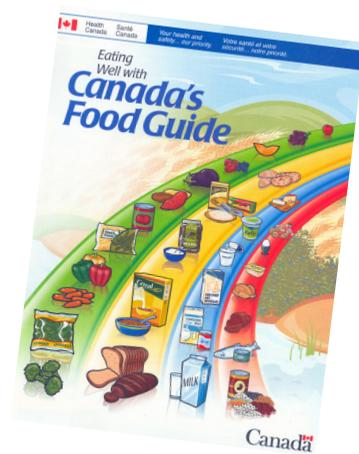
Having a TV in the bedroom was strongly associated with being overweight, even in preschool children. This link may occur because sitting in front of screens (televisions, computers and video games) takes time away from physical activity and participation in sport.

Although it is often not possible to completely eliminate "screen time," it is a good idea to reduce the amount of time spent on sedentary entertainment. The good news is that regular physical activity, even unstructured physical activity, helps protect against unhealthy weight gain and helps improve overall health.

There are lots of ways to incorporate movement into daily routines: walking to visit a friend, biking to school, taking even just one flight of stairs instead of an elevator or walking up a moving escalator...and many more!

Read on to see how four small communities committed themselves to boost sport participation and increase youth activity levels.

¹The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 2006



Health Canada's website has information and resources on nutrition labelling and the Public Health Agency of Canada's site has information and resources on physical activity. Copies of Canada's Food Guide and Physical Activity Guides are available by calling 1 800 O-Canada or visiting www.healthycanadians.ca



Aboriginal Girls Get in the Game

Team Spirit: Aboriginal Girls in Sport

Tallcree is a cluster of four small First Nations communities roughly 700 km north of Edmonton, Alberta. About half of the 500 residents are under age 30.

Three years ago Nadine Bouvette moved to the Tallcree First Nations community to head up the new Youth Department and carry on the work she started with the Alberta Future Leaders program that summer. At the time, there were no organized activities or sports for young people in the communities.

Today, things are different thanks to the Youth Department, community action and a little help from an exciting new program called “Team Spirit: Aboriginal Girls in Sport.” The program is designed to boost opportunities for girls and young women to participate and lead in sport and physical activity.

“It’s more than just learning how to shoot a basketball or serve a volleyball,” explains Nadine. “The girls really enjoy participating and often can’t wait for the next practice. They always cheer each other on. There is a real sense of teamwork.”

This teamwork extends beyond the doors of the new gymnasium into the broader community. The games between neighbouring communities are important social events for the girls and other members of the communities.

“People make banners, and there is always a crowd cheering on the teams,” says Nadine. She has also noticed that more adults are coming to the gym to play basketball and participate in other activities. “It really is about providing access and activities,” says Nadine. “Many community members were looking for something active to do, and now they have it.”

Isolated and remote communities face many barriers to involving youth in recreational sports, especially girls. Families and communities need to help break down those barriers.

How can people do this? Here are some of Nadine’s suggestions on how other communities can learn from the Tallcree experience and get girls more involved in sport and physical activity:

- Start with small steps at a level that can be sustained. Don’t go too big too fast.



- Keep youth involved in the process from start to finish. Build around what they want.
- Find out which activities interest the girls. Try introducing them to others as well. Help them learn a little about an activity or sport and then see if they like it.
- Keep new activities simple. If it is a success, then build in more structure.
- Keep in mind that not everyone is going to like everything you do. Try to provide variety. Run different activities at different times of the year.



In 2006, three girls from Tallcree qualified for the North American Indigenous Games held in Denver, Colorado. It was the first time they left the community, and it proved to be a fantastic opportunity to lead, learn and grow.

“This program is really about putting the focus on girls and providing them with opportunities in sport and in life,” says Nadine. “All girls and young women deserve that.”

The 2008 North American Indigenous Games will be held from August 2 to August 10 in Cowichan, British Columbia. More than 7000 athletes are expected to compete in 16 sports. Visit www.cowichan2008.com for more information on the Games.

“Team Spirit: Aboriginal Girls in Sport” is sponsored by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS; www.caaws.ca) and the Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC; www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca) and is supported by Canadian Heritage (Sport Canada).



For more information on healthy eating and physical activity, please visit www.healthycanadians.ca