

How Sweet It Is!

What Schools Need To Know About Sugar And Artificial Sweeteners

Pop doesn't steal calcium out of bones, but it replaces milk as a drink. Most kids AND adults drink more pop than milk!

One 600ml bottle of pop a day for 1 year = more than 22 kg of sugar, 89,000 calories ...

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH SUGAR?

A little bit is fine when it's used to make nutritious foods. But sugar provides "empty calories" that can displace healthier choices. For example, pop drinkers are more likely to have a low intake of calcium and other nutrients. Students who sip sugary drinks or graze on sugary foods also have a higher risk of tooth decay.

HOW MUCH IS A LOT OF SUGAR?

The World Health Organization recommends that no more than 10 per cent of our calories should come from added sugars. For younger students, that can mean as little as 10 teaspoons worth. That leaves very little room for sugary drinks or candies, but it is ample for kids to enjoy nutritious foods with some sweetening.

HOW DO WE KNOW IF A DRINK IS REAL JUICE OR FLAVOURED SUGAR-WATER?

Read the label and check the ingredient list. In Canada, only 100% juice can call itself "100% Juice". Words like "drink", "blend", "beverage", "cocktail", "splash" or "contains/made with 100% juice" etc usually mean sugar is added. Don't be fooled by drink names, labels, or container shapes. These are carefully designed to attract kids, and small amounts of juice or herbs might be added to entice adults. Don't be fooled by "natural" sounding names like honey, cane syrup, rice syrup, etc. either. These are all just different names for sugar.

IS FRUIT JUICE BETTER THAN OTHER SWEET DRINKS?

Fruit juice contains some of the natural vitamins, minerals and fibre found in fruit, so it is a better choice. However:

- ✓ it is too easy to drink 2-4 pieces of fruit's worth of juice, leading to too many calories.
- ✓ fructose, the sugar found in fruit, has less of an effect on our appetite than other sugars.
- ✓ juice has the same effect on teeth as other sugary drinks.

WHAT ABOUT FRUIT?

When children eat a piece of fruit, they get all its vitamins, minerals and fibre along with its fructose. Eating fruit is healthy.

DOES SUGAR AFFECT BEHAVIOUR?

The studies tell us "no", but teachers tell us "yes"! Is it just because children feel gleeful when they get a treat? Are some children sensitive to the colours or flavours in most sugary items? Is it the caffeine in chocolate and some drinks?

OR DOES SUGAR REALLY AFFECT THE BRAIN?

A student's brain needs glucose (sugar) to fuel its thinking processes. Both complex carbohydrates and sugars are digested to create glucose to fuel the brain. Sugar by itself provides a short rush of brain fuel. This is why children might get tired or grumpy soon after having a sugary item.



Quench your students' thirst with:

1. Unlimited plain water
2. Milk, plain or flavoured*
3. Limited amounts of 100% juice or calcium fortified 100% juice*

* see the Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools

Protein, fat or fibre eaten with carbohydrates or sugars gives the brain a steadier energy supply for a longer time. This might explain why a child who just ate a healthy snack seems better behaved than a child who just had a sugary item.

WHAT ABOUT ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS?

There are a lot of rumours and myths about artificial sweeteners. Health Canada has approved their use in small amounts for school age children. At school, they are best used to enhance the flavour of nutritious foods. To help prevent children from getting used to sweet-tasting non-nutritious items, schools should minimize sales of diet pop and diet candy.

Sugar Maximum: 10% of Calories

	Boys	Girls
Years of Age	cubes or teaspoons	
4-8 years	11	10
9-13 years	14	13
14-18 years	20	15

WHAT DOES A "SMALL AMOUNT" OF ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER LOOK LIKE?

The Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for aspartame for children ranges from 640-2680 mg/day, depending on their body weight. One tablet or packet of aspartame contains 15-35 mg of aspartame and could be considered a "small amount" for most children. Diet pop has the equivalent of 4-9 packets/tablets of aspartame in a 355 mL can, or 6-15 packets/tablets in a 600 mL bottle.

This represents a larger portion of the ADI for children and is one reason why the Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools (2005, BC Ministry of Education) recommend minimizing access to diet drinks. For other foods and drinks, read the labels to find out how much artificial sweetener was added and compare it to the ADI.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ✓ Acceptable Daily Intake of Artificial Sweeteners: www.diabetes.ca/files/en_sweeteners_final.pdf AND www.diabetes.ca/Section_About/sweeteners.asp
- ✓ North Carolina School Nutrition Action Committee, "Soft Drinks and School Age Children", 2002, [www.nutritionnc.com/TeamNutrition/SoftDrink\(8-19\).pdf](http://www.nutritionnc.com/TeamNutrition/SoftDrink(8-19).pdf)
- ✓ American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy, "Soft Drinks in Schools", <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;113/1/152>
- ✓ Calgary Health Region, "Rethink Your Drink", www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/rethinkyourdrink/introduction.htm
- ✓ Center For Science in the Public Interest, "Liquid Candy", 2005, www.cspinet.org/liquidcandy/index.html
- ✓ Health Canada's response to aspartame rumours: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/facts-faits/aspartame/aspartame01_e.html
- ✓ Dial-A-Dietitian at 604-732-9191 (toll-free in BC at 1-800-667-3438)