



**BC Healthy Living Alliance**  
working together to promote wellness and prevent chronic disease

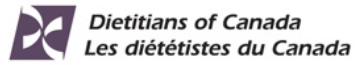
# Healthy Eating Strategy

MARCH 2008



**ActNowBC**

An initiative of these BC Healthy Living Alliance members



## Making the Healthy Choice the Easier Choice for British Columbians

The BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA) is a group of organizations working to support British Columbians to eat healthier, get active and live tobacco-free. The BCHLA was awarded a one-time grant of \$25.2 million from ActNow BC, the provincial government's health and wellness initiative that is striving to make British Columbia the healthiest population ever to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

To make healthier choices easier for British Columbians, the BCHLA is implementing four major strategies, each with its own working team and plan of action:

**1. Healthy Eating Strategy**  
Providing knowledge and easier access so families can make better food and beverage choices.

**2. Physical Activity Strategy**  
Creating opportunities and overcoming barriers to make physical activity a priority for everyone.

**3. Tobacco Reduction Strategy**  
Reaching young adults where they work, study, play and live, with smoking prevention, protection and cessation initiatives.

**4. Community Capacity Building Strategy**  
Building stronger networks, leadership and skills to support the development of healthier communities.

Combined together – healthy eating and beverage choices, physical activity and tobacco reduction along with capacity building – can significantly reduce the risk of serious chronic diseases – like cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory disease.

## The Healthy Eating Strategy

The goal of the Healthy Eating Strategy is to make healthy food more readily available and provide BC families with the skills and knowledge necessary for making sound snack, meal and beverage choices.

In today's busy world, food and beverage selection and preparation does not just happen in the kitchen.

That is why BCHLA's Healthy Eating Strategy plans to reach families in communities where they work, play and learn.

Four major initiatives have been identified that work together to provide the important information and easier access to healthy foods. Working with others and building on existing strengths and activities is considered key to the success of these four initiatives.

*This update provides an overview of the four key initiatives within the Healthy Eating Strategy, one of four major strategies being implemented by the BC Healthy Living Alliance. The initiatives' activities completed or underway to March 2008 are outlined.*

*If you have questions about the individual initiatives, please contact the specific initiative managers/coordinators identified in this update.*

## 1. Healthy Food and Beverages at School, Work and Play

BCHLA members are working to change the way schools, recreation facilities and local government buildings approach and present food choices. This initiative includes a focus on food and beverage sales in schools across the province and in recreational facilities and local government buildings.

### 1 a. Supporting Implementation of the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*

ORGANIZATION LEAD: **Dietitians of Canada, BC Region**

Project Coordinator: Estelle Dufresne

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**Dietitians of Canada**  
**Les diététistes du Canada**

**Dietitians of Canada** is working closely with the school community to support happier and faster implementation of the provincial *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools*. Identifying key barriers and putting in place the tools, resources and supports to minimize the barriers is the focus.

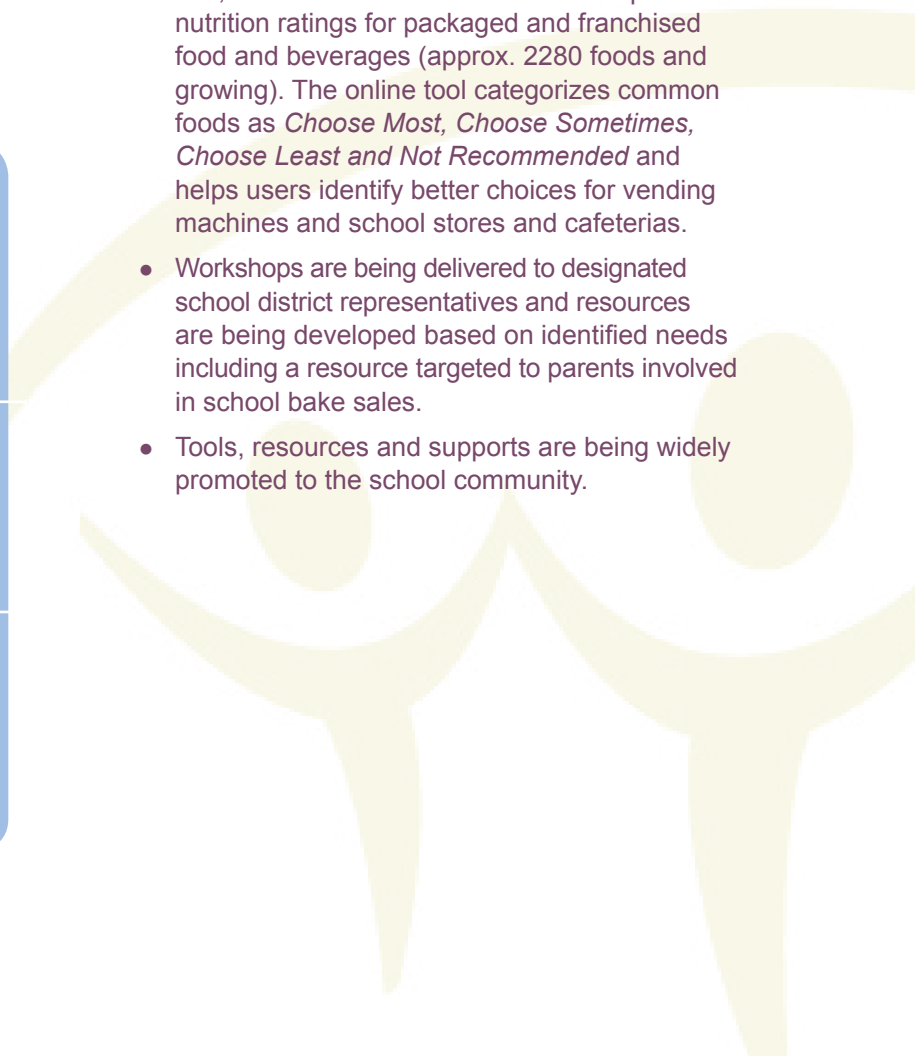
#### ACTIVITIES

- Dial-a-Dietitian expanded its call centre in June 2007 to answer the school communities' questions about implementing the *Guidelines* and to link callers to tools and local supports.
- The Brand Name Food List, a web-based tool, was launched in October 2007 to provide nutrition ratings for packaged and franchised food and beverages (approx. 2280 foods and growing). The online tool categorizes common foods as *Choose Most*, *Choose Sometimes*, *Choose Least and Not Recommended* and helps users identify better choices for vending machines and school stores and cafeterias.
- Workshops are being delivered to designated school district representatives and resources are being developed based on identified needs including a resource targeted to parents involved in school bake sales.
- Tools, resources and supports are being widely promoted to the school community.

**61%** of British Columbian **children** aged 12-18 do not eat enough **vegetables and fruit**.

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Consumption of **snack food** such as chips, crackers, popcorn and pretzels has **tripled** since the 1970s.



## 1 b. Healthy Food and Beverage Sales in Recreational Facilities and Local Government Buildings

ORGANIZATION CO-LEADS: **BC Recreation and Parks Association** and **Union of BC Municipalities**

Provincial Coordinator: Anna Kirbyson

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The **BC Recreation and Parks Association**, along with the **Union of BC Municipalities**, co-lead the initiative providing provincial coordination of supports for local government buildings and recreational facilities to voluntarily adopt the sale of healthy food and beverages. Recreation centres that are attached to or located near schools will be a priority to ensure consistency with the school food and beverage *Guidelines*.

### ACTIVITIES

- Plans are in place to support key decision makers and building/facility managers to implement healthy food and beverage sales through:
  - the provision of best practices and resources
  - regional workshops and in-community work sessions
  - seed grants for planning and implementing Healthy Food and Beverage Sales guidelines
  - collaboration with industry, government and community organizations.
- A Municipal Recreation Food Environment Action Toolkit (MRFEAT) is being disseminated for use by local governments, individual facilities and community organizations to support healthy food and beverage sales planning, implementation and policy development.
- Work is being undertaken jointly with the school guidelines initiative to inform the industry on how they can contribute to the availability of healthy choices and to support their participation.

## 2. Farm to School Salad Bar

ORGANIZATION LEAD: **Public Health Association of BC**

Project Manager: Joanne Bays

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The **Public Health Association of BC**, in partnership with provincial, regional and local groups, is piloting a Farm to School Salad Bar initiative within 12 schools in the Northern and Interior Health Regions. Strengthening relationships between the school and the farm is an important aspect of this program. Foods from local farms are grown and harvested to fill a salad bar twice per week in participating schools. Children, parents, school staff, farmers – the whole community – benefit from a program that broadens knowledge and experiences of growing, harvesting, preparing and tasting fresh local greens.

### ACTIVITIES

- A Farm to School Salad Bar Advisory Committee has been established.
- A Farm to School Salad Bar Network is under development.
- Dragon Lake Elementary School, the first in the province to launch a program of this kind, has agreed to participate as the lead school.
- Site visits are underway to assess and prepare for the launch of the program in schools in the communities of Hazelton, Williams Lake and Kimberley.

### 3. Food Skills for Families

ORGANIZATION LEAD: **Canadian Diabetes Association**

Project Manager: TBA In the interim contact: Jean Blake

Phone: 604.732.1331 ext. 254



Cooking healthy food at home that is tasty and appealing to our families is not always easy. Adding to the challenge is the fact that some families have limited incomes or do not have basic information about where to start. Drawing on the strengths of two existing programs – *Cooking Fun for Families* and *Cooking for Your Life* – the **Canadian Diabetes Association** is developing a new food skills program geared to the needs of Aboriginal, South Asian, new immigrant and low income families. The initiative builds skills necessary for choosing and preparing healthy foods. *Food Skills for Families* will be offered in a wide range of community-based facilities and training of community facilitators will help ensure a broad reach to those who need it most.

#### ACTIVITIES

- The *Food Skills for Families* Curriculum Framework has been developed and the core curriculum and four target population modules are under development – for Aboriginal, South Asian, new immigrant and low income families.
- A number of Master trainers have been identified with a plan to have at least ten Master trainers – two in each health region and approximately 60 Community Facilitators across the province.
- Pilot sites to test the core curriculum and four target population modules are being identified.
- Partners who can assist in identifying groups that have a high level of readiness to host the *Food Skills for Families* program and reach out to participants from the target populations are being identified.

### 4. Sip Smart!

ORGANIZATION CO-LEADS: **BC Pediatric Society** and **Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon**

Project Manager: Pat Zellinsky

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From sport drinks to pop to fruit “punch”, sugar-sweetened beverages are everywhere. To kick this liquid-sugar habit, the **BC Pediatric Society** and **Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon** are launching an elementary school educational program. Sip Smart! includes innovative resource materials and a teacher-friendly learning module designed to reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages by students in Grades 4 – 6. By teaching kids why it is important to drink less sugary-drinks, Sip Smart! complements BCHLA’s other efforts to reduce unhealthy choices in schools. The goal – when kids are thirsty, they reach for healthier thirst quenchers.

#### ACTIVITIES

- Three classroom lessons and visual materials have been developed for the Sip Smart! module, and a pilot in 15 classrooms started in the first week of March.
- A strong facilitation team has been recruited and participated in a two-day training course. Pilot classrooms have been identified in the north, interior, island and lower mainland that demonstrate a range of socioeconomic status and ethnic diversity characteristics. Students span Grades 4 – 6.
- A school liaison in interior/northern British Columbia is expected to be hired by mid-March 2008.
- Recruitment is underway for 215 additional “rollout” classrooms.