

Healthy Eating/ Active Living, Sleep and Mental Health



Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Programs of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- W – 8.1 Examine the relationship between choices and resulting consequences.
- W – 8.2 Analyze the impact of positive and changing choices on health throughout the lifespan, e.g., need for varying amounts of sleep, calcium.

Teacher Background

Mental health is a key element of a person’s overall health. The relationship between physical and mental health (and the social, biological, environmental and psychological determinants of health) is complex and not completely understood.

- Physical illnesses and mental illnesses often occur together, e.g., depression and heart disease.
- The state of a person’s mental health can influence the onset or course of a physical or mental illness. Similarly, the state of a person’s physical health can influence their mental health (*WHO, 2005*).

In recent years there has been an increase in understanding about the relationship between good mental health, healthy eating and physical activity. More recently a discussion about getting enough sleep has entered this arena. The rapid physiological, emotional, and social changes of adolescence often have disturbing effects on sleep.

- Teenagers need more sleep than younger school age children but usually get less, and the shortfall causes many problems. Daytime fatigue and drowsiness may affect schoolwork by reducing concentration and short-term memory.
- Sleepy teenagers are more easily injured, especially in traffic accidents, and lack of sleep raises the risk of depression and the use of alcohol and illicit drugs. Students do not have to feel sleep deprived to experience the negative effects; they adapt. They may not report feeling sleepy even though their functioning has diminished (*Johnson, 2003*).

Objectives

- Students will identify how being physically active and getting adequate sleep promote mental health.
- Using the Sleep and Bedtime Activities Diary, students track their sleep for a week.
- Students will analyze the impact of inadequate or poor quality sleep e.g., how does this impact school functioning and day-to-day life, what steps could you take to improve sleep quality and quantity.

Materials

- *Healthy Eating and Active Living* for ages 13–18 booklets from Healthy U To order: email healthy.u@gov.ab.ca and include what you are using the materials for, how many copies you need, and a complete mailing address
- Handout: *Sleep and Bedtime Activities Diary*
- Handout: *Dear Abby*
- Sticky notes for each small group
- Additional resources: *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* Order on-line at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

Get Ready

This lesson will focus on ways teens can ensure maintaining optimal activity levels and getting adequate sleep.

Activity 1: Physical Activity and Mental Health

In small groups:

- Brainstorm the challenges that teens have to being physically active for a total of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity per day. Discuss.
- Write 1 challenge on each sticky note (up to 6 sticky notes). Place these on the wall around the room. Read each of the sticky notes and have students move to the sticky note that is their biggest challenge. Then have them move to their second biggest challenge.
- Discuss with the students how everyone has challenges and how they can be overcome.

Knot Again (optional activity)

- Gather all the students into one large circle or two smaller circles.
- Each person will hold out their hands into the center and grab two other hands of other students (not the same person for both hands).
- Now the group is in one large knot and they must become untangled without letting go.
- The end result should be a large circle facing inwards or outwards.
- You can do this activity with blindfolds.

This activity demonstrates how sometimes we can have challenges, but there are ways to get through them.

Activity 2: Sleep and Mental Health

- In small groups, brainstorm some of the problems teens experience if they are not fully rested.
- Provide students with “*Dear Abby*” handout. Have students read the “*Dear Abby*” letter and let them respond with advice to “Tired at School”. After they have completed their letter, let them exchange their letter with a partner. Have their partner list 3 suggestions of the advice that was given to “Tired at School” who wrote to Dear Abby.

Discussion

Physical Activity and Mental Health

Challenges to doing 60 minutes of physical activity a day:

- Family is not active
- Would rather play video games or talk to friends via computer
- Don’t like sports
- Don’t have money to join teams/gym
- Too busy with school and other events
- Too tired after school

Suggestions to overcome these challenges:

- Invite family members to accompany you on a walk in the neighborhood.
- Be aware of how much recreational screen time you get (should be limiting to no more than 2 hours/day), and plan some activity. You do not have to get the whole 60 minutes at once.
- Pick an activity you enjoy. The best activity is the one you will do. Check out teen friendly activities at your local community league. Do not be afraid to try

new things like yoga or tai chi. Do you have a fitness centre in your school – if yes, get instruction on how to use the equipment.

- Take advantage of community activities and free or reduced rate swims at the local pool.
- For families that need some assistance, there are special leisure centre passes available in some communities, e.g., the Leisure Access Program in Edmonton.
- Take time during breaks at school to take a short walk around the school. Invite a friend to join you. Get off the bus before your stop so you have a longer walk home.
- Being active actually gives you energy, so if you are feeling tired, try a quick walk or run to revitalize yourself.
- Think of ways you can build activity into your day-to-day routine, and get moving today!

Sleep and Mental Health

Most teens need 9 to 11 hours of sleep every night.

Problems from not being fully rested include:

- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating and learning
- Don't move information from short-term to long-term memory as well
- Falling asleep in class
- Mood swings and behavior problems
- More accident prone
- More prone to depression
- Trying to catch up on weekend further confuses your internal clock

Suggestions for getting a good night sleep:

- Stay away from stimulants like caffeine in the evening, including chocolate, colas, and other caffeinated beverages. These delay sleep and increase night waking.
- Do not go to bed hungry, have a light snack.
- Turn off any TVs, computers or cell phones, or just do not have electronics in the bedroom.
- Disengage from any stimulating activities like exercise, computer games or talking on phone for at least 30 minutes prior to bedtime. Reading is much more relaxing and may help you fall asleep.
- Taking a warm bath or shower helps prepare the body for sleep.

- If you are not feeling rested and functioning at your best most days, talk to your parents. You may need to speak to a doctor if you are having problems sleeping in spite of trying the above tips.
- Try a cup of hot milk.

Conclusion

Being mentally well includes looking after your physical health as well. Therefore it is important to be physically active and get enough sleep.

Take Home Activity

Using the handout Sleep and Bedtime Activities Diary, students will record how many hours of sleep they get every night for one week. Follow up with classroom discussion about the importance of getting adequate sleep.

Assessment Strategy

Students will talk about how many hours of sleep are optimal for promoting mental wellness and ideas for overcoming challenges related to sleep.

References

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Sleep and Bedtime Activities Diary

Week (date):

Day: Write in below, starting on the day in the week that you begin with:
 Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Day	Time went to sleep	What was I doing before I went to bed? Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playing a sport • playing a video game • reading a book • watching TV • Others: write down other activities that apply to you 	Did this affect what time you went to sleep?	
			Yes	No
1			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>