

Healthy Eating/ Active Living, Sleep and Mental Health



Alberta Education Health & Life Skills Programs of Studies Outcomes

The student will...

- W – 9.1 Use knowledge of a healthy, active lifestyle to promote and encourage family/peer/community involvement.
- W – 9.5 Develop strategies that promote healthy nutritional choices for self and others, e.g., adopt goals that reflect healthy eating, encourage the placement of nutritious food in vending machines.

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*).

Objectives

- Students will identify how eating breakfast and being physically active promote mental health.
- Students will develop a plan using SMART goals to create a plan for themselves to eat healthy breakfasts.
- Students will plan an active living challenge for the whole school.

Materials

- SMART Goals worksheets print from www.healthyalberta.com (click on About Healthy U, then click on Healthy U Materials, scroll down to For Teens, Healthy Eating and Active Living SMART Goals, print 2 per student).
- *Healthy Eating and Active Living* for ages 13-18 booklets from Healthy U - To order: email healthy.u@gov.ab.ca (include what you are using the materials for, how many copies you need, and a complete mailing address).
- Additional resources: *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* - order on-line at: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide.
- Wake Up to Breakfast Every Day: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/SchoolsTeachers/if-sch-nfs-wake-up-to-breakfast.pdf>

Get Ready

One way to promote mental health is to take care of your physical health. Eating healthy foods and being physically active helps us deal with the effects of stress, which seems to play a key role in many mental disorders (CAMH - Mental Health and Addiction 101 Series).

This lesson will focus on ways teens can ensure they're eating a nutritious and balanced diet while maintaining optimal activity levels.

Activity 1: Healthy Eating and Mental Health

- Each student makes a list of items that they typically eat for breakfast.
- The teacher asks students for their responses and records them on chart paper. The teacher discusses their choices and which category they fit into the *Canada Food Guide*.
- Working with a partner, students will create a "wordle" using www.wordle.net that incorporates the theme of breakfast and various healthy choices that can be made.

Activity 2: Physical Activity and Mental Health

- Have either a large group discussion or divide the class into smaller groups. Each group needs one recorder and one reporter; all groups report back to class.
- There are many kinds of physical activity that teens can do to achieve their recommended 60 minutes per day. Name some that you have done in the last 3 days - record on board.
- Working in groups, have students design an active living challenge for the entire school. Share plans with entire class as time allows. If time is available, have students implement the active living plan into the whole school.

Discussion

Healthy Eating and Mental Health

Getting all the nutrients you need from food everyday is easier to accomplish if you eat a healthy breakfast. In Junior High, students tend to sleep in and feel that they do not have time for breakfast. Discuss some of the options that you can have for a “breakfast on the go”.

Healthy eating nourishes the body, including the brain, and supports mental health through:

- Improved overall health and vitality
- Increased ability to concentrate
- Reduced irritability and mood swings
- Lowered risk of tiredness and illness

There is some evidence that healthy eating may be a factor in lowered risk of depression and improved ability to deal with stress and anxiety.

Physical Activity and Mental Health

During junior high years, activity levels may be dropping off for some students, and busy lives interfere with getting enough sleep. All these factors impact our mental well-being.

Three types of activity:

- Endurance activities (E) – increase your heart rate and work your lungs. They benefit your cardiovascular system.
- Strength activities (S) – strengthen and build muscles and bones using resistance.
- Flexibility activities (F) – help to keep joints and muscles supple.

Teens should engage in a variety of activities in their day. Examples include:

- Swimming (E, S)
- Biking (E)
- Running (E)
- Racket sports (E)
- Hockey (E)
- Soccer (E)
- Dance (E, F)
- Skiing (E)
- Rock climbing (S)
- Gymnastics (S, F)
- Yoga (F)

Conclusion

Being mentally well includes looking after your physical health. Therefore it is important to be physically active and start off your day with a healthy breakfast.

Take Home Activity

Have students use SMART goals worksheet from Healthy U to individually identify healthy breakfast plans at home for family members (eating breakfast, being active).

Assessment Strategy

The class will look for various health food choices from the Canada Food Guide within each wordle.

References

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