Barriers to Physical Activity

Students were also asked what stops them from being more physically active in their spare time. In total, the three main reasons students reported were homework (57%), fitness for being very active (43%), and having time to do it (29%) (see Graph B).

In all grades, the main barrier to being more physically active was homework. For Grade 9 and 7 students, the second barrier reported was putting themselves to be active already, while in Grade 11 students reported that their jobs were a barrier. The third barrier reported for Grades 7, 9, and 11 students was a lack of time, while Grade 10 students reported that their parents were a barrier.

Of the students who perceived themselves to be very active already, 95% were found not to be the most recommended physical activity expecters for healthy growth and development. Only 8% of the students reported being physically active already, engaged in vigorous and moderate activity for a combined total of 90 minutes a day.

Relationships

A relationship was found between active eating behavior and nutrition and exercise, and those with statistical significance are reported below.

A relationship was found between eating breakfast and self-rated eating habits. Of the students who indicated that they did not eat something in the morning every day, a higher percentage of sugary drinks, 20% Very Good, 15% Good, 18% Fair, 5% Poor, 5% Poor. This may indicate that students are not aware of the importance of eating something in the morning.

A relationship was found between the consumption of vegetables and fruit and milk products. Of the students who did not drink milk every day, 30% of the students reported on consumption of vegetables and fruits. These 2 food groups provide nutrients, including calcium, vitamins and fluids needed for optimum health, growth and development.

Relationships between students who participated in the minimum 90 minutes of physical activity (daily exercise and vigorous combined) and healthy eating initiatives were not reported because only a small proportion of students (118 students) met the recommended daily requirements for physical activity.

For more information on the web:

Web resources:

National Association for the Planning of Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance
Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI)
Canadian International Recreation Association - Ontario http://www.rimex.org
Canadian Sports Council www.cpsc.ca Go 4 Green (the active and safe routes to school) www.go4green.ca
Ontario Physical & Health Education Association (OPHEEA) www.ophkea.ca
Active 2010 campaign www.activ2010.ca

Nutrition websites:

Health Canada - Canada’s Food Guide for Healthy Living www.hc-sc.gc.ca
Dietitians of Canada www.ddcan.ca

Other websites:

Healthy Ontario www.healthyontario.com
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario www.hsf.on.ca
Canadian Health Network www.canadian-health-network.ca

References


Resources

Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit www.hnhu.ca
Fraser Health Authority www.fraserhealth.ca
Northwestern Health Unit www.nwuonline.com
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario www.hsf.on.ca
Ontario Physical & Health Education Association (OPHEEA) www.ophkea.ca

Focus on Nutrition & Physical Activity

Methodology

The Student Health Survey was administered within the Grand Erie District School Board and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board in the fall of 2005. The survey is a collaborative project between the Brant County Health Unit and the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit. In order to make the results meaningful, schools were selected in a representative manner and a large sample of students was included. The nutrition and physical activity components of the survey were completed by 2371 students at grades 7, 9, and 11 (approximately 30%). All choices in a particular gender were surveyed in selected schools. The entire survey came with 11 health related topics.

Introduction

Nutrition and physical activity play an important role in the health of children and youth. Research shows that there are links between good nutrition, physical activity and school performance and better overall health. Well-nourished and active children are more likely to be better prepared to learn and maintain their physical and mental health as adults. Proper nutrition and lack of physical activity contribute to the rising rates of childhood and adolescent overweight, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

This report provides a brief look at eating habits and physical activity patterns of students at Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties. A total of 95% of respondents indicated that students, parents and caregivers working with youth is also included.
Canadian studies show a rise in childhood obesity rates and a loss in overall intake of food from the food groups of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating among youth.

Students were asked to rate their eating habits. A higher percentage of students rated their eating habits as "Okay" (45%) compared to "Excellent" (20%). However, 35% rated their eating habits as "Fair or poor," which increased with grade and was highest in Grade 11 (29%) (See Graph 1). Overall, females were more likely to rate their eating habits poorer than males.

Graph 2

Students were asked how often they are eating something in the morning. Morning was defined as anytime between when you first wake up and before your next class time, so that students do not eat while they are for breakfast, so as not to rely on whether they included the recommended minimum of 3 out of 4 food groups (as outlined in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating).

Overall, a large percentage of the sample (62%) reported that they do not eat something in the morning every day (See Graph 2).

Graph 3

Students were asked if they were currently trying to lose weight. In total, 30% of students reported that they were currently trying to lose weight. More females (38%) than males (26%) reported that they were currently trying to lose weight. The percentage of students who reported that they are currently trying to lose weight was similar in both genders.

Graph 4

Students were asked if they are currently trying to gain weight. Overall, 30% of students reported that they were trying to gain weight. The overall percentage of students who were trying to gain weight increased successively from Grade 7 (7%) to Grade 11 (19%).

Students were asked what they have done to try to lose or gain weight in their lifetime. Approximately 54% of students reported that they have tried to lose weight in their lifetime. Of the 54%, approximately 80% reported exercising to lose weight, 3% did not eat foods that they perceived were fattening, while 34% ate less/reduced meals (See Graph 6).

Graph 5

Students were asked if they were currently eating more than the recommended daily servings of foods. The results suggest that over one half of Canadian children and youth (52%) are not eating the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables (4 servings daily), which includes sports (basketball, hockey, competitive track and field, and non-sport activity (skiing, but walking, tennis, etc.) (Graph 1). Overall, students in grades 9, 10, and 11 were found to be first asked if they were physically active. See Graph 7, for an overview of time of day when students were physically active by grade level.

Graph 6

Students were asked how often they participated in vigorous physical activity (grade by grade) for at least 20 minutes within the last 5 days. Examples of vigorous physical activity included basketball, swimming, and fast dancing. Students were also asked how often they participated in moderate (grade by grade) for at least 20 minutes daily for at least 20 minutes within the last 5 days. Examples of moderate physical activity included walking, bowling, and cycling. Students who participated in vigorous physical activities included both school and non-school activities.

Graph 7

Students were asked how often they consumed at least one serving of fruits and vegetables daily. Students were also asked how often they consumed at least one serving of fruits and vegetables in a typical day. (Graph 1). Results of the Food Habits of Canadian Study revealed that over half of all adults and males and 40-44% of adults and females are not consuming the minimum number of servings of milk products.