THE HEALTHY KIDS STRATEGY

The health, social and economic costs of obesity are well-documented and in January 2012 the Ontario government announced an ambitious target of reducing childhood obesity by 20 per cent over five years. They convened the Healthy Kids Panel, a multi-sectoral panel of experts to recommend how we can keep more kids at healthy weights.

No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy presents the Panel’s assessment of the problem as well as recommendations for action. It outlines a comprehensive three-pronged strategy with a series of recommended strategies for how we can best promote the health and well-being of children and youth:

1. **Start all kids on the path to health** by focusing on maternal, prenatal and infant care. Strategies include: educating pregnant women and women of child-bearing age on the importance of healthy lifestyle choices, as well as promoting breastfeeding.

2. **Change the food environment** to ensure that health promotion efforts are not undermined by outside interests, but rather supported through healthy public policy. Examples of strategies: banning the marketing of junk foods to children and enforcing calorie labelling on restaurant menus.

3. **Create healthy communities** by changing the space where kids live, learn and play. Strategies include: a comprehensive healthy kids social marketing campaign that incorporates messages about healthy eating, physical activity, active transportation, mental health and adequate sleep.

In addition, the report recommends a minimum 10-year government commitment to the issue and provides advice on implementation, including milestones for the first year.

Highlights from HC Link’s Working Together on The Healthy Kids Strategy (HKS) Webinar Series

Webinar #1 addressed the HKS report’s first prong: “Start all kids on the path to health”.

After starting with an overview of The Healthy Kids Strategy report and its recommendations, the two presenters addressed the topic of prenatal and early childhood health. Slides | Recording A | Recording B | Recap blog post

**Dr. Zach Ferrar**, a recognized leader in prenatal health and wellness, spoke of how prenatal obesity poses significant health risks to both mother and baby during pregnancy and beyond. He discussed many research findings related to gestational weight gain, noting that as it increases so does the proportion of neonates that are larger at birth, and that overnutrition in pregnancy may result in the fetus having an increased risk for obesity through life.

**Hiltrud Dawson**, of the Best Start Resource Centre (BSRC) at Health Nexus, described several relevant BSRC projects:

1. **Creating an online learning module** to increase knowledge and skills of service providers in promoting healthy weights in children aged 0-12 (a partnership with the Physical Activity Resource Centre).

2. **Developing evidence-informed key messages, tools and resources** for service providers to provide consistent prenatal information, including those that support healthy weights.

3. **Baby-Friendly Initiative Strategy for Ontario** - Engagement strategies, tools, resources and training that encourage baby-friendly policies, programs and locations in order to enhance breastfeeding in Ontario.

4. **Breastfeeding Community Project** - Grants to enhance supports for populations with lower breastfeeding rates.
Webinar #2 considered the second part of the Strategy: "Change the food environment".

Christina Tran from the Nutrition Resource Centre moderated the webinar and opened with a brief overview of the panel's recommendations for changing the food environment.  

Sandra Laclé & Tracey Weatherbe of the Sudbury District Health Unit provided examples of public health actions that address the panel's ten recommendations for changing the food environment.

Dr. Rhonda Hanning, a professor at the University of Waterloo, described how their research program developed tailored approaches to assist remote Ontario First Nation communities in planning, implementing and evaluating student nutrition programs, which have been shown to support healthier food environments and sustainable improvements to the diets of vulnerable children.

Alexandra Lacarte discussed the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit’s experience with creating healthy eating environments in childcare centres, focusing in particular on the Healthy Eating Environment Toolkit (HEET) that was developed by health unit staff.

Gayle Kabbash-Cruikshank & Meaghan Richardson of the Halton Region Food Council described their work with "Feeding Halton", a community food distribution program run by a collaborative of social service organizations and the agricultural community.

Webinar #3 covered the third and final prong of HKS: “Create healthy communities”.

This webinar opened with a brief summary of the panel's eight recommendations relating to creating healthy communities. Four guest presenters then shared healthy community and capacity-building initiatives that they are working on.

Drew Maginn & Margaret Good discussed how Ophea’s Healthy Schools approach helps kids develop the necessary skills to make healthy choices through quality school-based health and physical activity programs and services. They reviewed the supports available on the Healthy Schools section of the Ophea website, such as videos, planning tools, posters and research information, plus access to their consultation services.

Tamar Meyer of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CMAH) Health Promotion Resource Centre offered highlights from CAMH’s Connecting the Dots report that show how public health units are addressing child and youth mental health and described other mental health and healthy weight activities currently being undertaken.

Kayla Lee from the Niagara Region Public Health spoke about an innovative program that operates in several Niagara area schools called F.U.E.L. (Females Using Energy for Life). This free, female-only after-school physical activity program engages all interested high school girls in peer-led, non-competitive activities.

Resources

Active Healthy Kids Canada’s 2014 Report Card
Active Healthy Kids Canada  |  2014
This 10th edition of the most current and comprehensive annual assessment of the physical activity of children and youth in Canada reveals how we stack up against 14 other countries. It includes an analysis of what this means for Canada and what we can learn from other countries to improve the grade.

2014 Report Card Communication Tools: Fact sheets, slides, infographics and web banners for use in presentations, on websites and social media to inspire action to improve the grade.

Active Living, Children & Youth – Factsheet
Healthy Canada by Design CLASP | 2012
This resource from the Planning for Healthy Community Fact Sheet Series provides Canadian planning practitioners and community stakeholders with a summary of Canadian research on child and youth-friendly healthy communities conducted between 2007 and 2011, and summarizes key “take home” points that emerged as common, overarching themes from the review.
### Addressing Obesity in Children & Youth: Evidence to Guide Action in Ontario

*Public Health Ontario | 2013*

A comprehensive primer of scientific evidence and data that outlines:

- Trends in risk factors, as well as strategies to measure/monitor obesity rates and risk factors;
- The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions to prevent and treat overweight/obesity; &
- Healthy weight promotion and obesity prevention initiatives implemented by Ontario public health units and other jurisdictions.

### Community-based Strategies for Healthy Weight Promotion in Children & Youth

*HC Link | 2013*

A review of the quality of evidence supporting the use of four broad community-based strategies recommended to address childhood obesity: school-based interventions, community design and active transportation, industry and food system change, and promotion of breastfeeding. Sources of evidence include academic and grey literature from Canadian, US and European contexts.

### Healthy Children Forum: Applying Evidence to Local Action for Healthy Weights

*Public Health Ontario | 2014*

The forum provided an opportunity to hear from local, national, and international experts about programs and approaches to address childhood obesity. Presentations centred around five themes: Measuring and Monitoring, Food & Beverage Environment, Taking Action from the Start: The Early Years, Whole of Community Approaches, and Physical Activity Environment.

### Local Sustainable Food Systems: Ensuring food for today and our future

*HC Link | 2014*

Examines the components of the food system and basic principles of sustainable food system development. By engaging communities in developing sustainable local food systems, we can facilitate the efficient use and conservation of our food supply and improve community food security, health, economic stability and the natural environment.

### Obesity in Preconception and Pregnancy

*Best Start Resource Centre | 2014*

This report provides current information about the prevalence of, risk factors for, and implications of obesity in the preconception and perinatal periods in Ontario. Additional information is presented concerning approaches that have been effective in addressing obesity in the preconception and prenatal periods, although evidence-based practices are limited at this time and additional research is needed.

### OCDPA's Evidence-Informed Messages

*Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance | 2010*

In consultation with external experts, OCDPA developed these messages to focus attention and promote collective action on chronic disease prevention issues and to improve the health of Ontarians. The evidence-informed messages address the following chronic disease risk factors: High-risk Alcohol Consumption, Physical Inactivity, Poor Mental Health, Tobacco Use Exposure and Unhealthy Eating.

### Understanding Partners Poster Series

*Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC) | 2013*

This poster series provides base-level information as it relates to Schools, Public Health, Parents and Recreation Providers as partners in building healthy school communities and practical information for building effective relationships with each of these partners.

Also from PARC: Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities: How You Can Make a Difference, an illustrated video to help a broad audience understand the role they can play in building healthy schools.
Organizations & Initiatives

**Canadian Obesity Network** – A professional obesity organization for health care providers, researchers, policy makers and obesity stakeholders in Canada that provides a platform to foster knowledge translation, capacity building and partnerships among stakeholders so they may develop effective solutions to prevent and treat obesity. Resources include [5As for Obesity Management](#).

**EPODE International Network** – EPODE (Ensemble Prévenons l’Obésité des Enfants - Together Let's Prevent Childhood Obesity) is a coordinated, capacity-building approach aimed at reducing childhood obesity through sustainable strategies based on Community Based Programs. It began in France and has been recognized by the World Health Organization as an international best practice in obesity prevention. The Healthy Kids Community Challenge is based on EPODE methodology.

**Healthy Kids Community Challenge** – The Government of Ontario has provided 45 Ontario communities with funding, training and other resources over four years to implement community programs and activities focused on healthy eating, physical activity and appropriate sleep for children and youth. These four designated “**Healthy Kids Resource Centres**” will be supporting the communities participating in the challenge:

- HC Link
- Health Promotion Capacity Building Resource Centre at Public Health Ontario
- Nutrition Resource Centre
- Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC)

**Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy** – Many of Ontario’s leading health, food and farm groups have been working on a Food and Nutrition Strategy for the province. The proposed Strategy provides a framework to improve the wholistic health and well-being of people in Ontario, reduce the financial burden of chronic disease, and strengthen the economic viability and resiliency of Ontario’s food systems. It is intended to work across government, fostering an inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder coordinated approach to food policy and program development.

*Also visit the Healthy Kids Resources section on HC Link’s website.*

**HC Link can support your work!**

HC Link offers **Consulting Services** (free of charge) to support community groups, organizations and partnerships in building healthy communities. Our consultants can work with your group and provide valuable resources, tools, problem-solving, advice and mentorship to meet your specific needs.

*Contact us online or at 1-855-848-1575 to start the conversation!*