

Resources for Schools

The *ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy 2015* is about making the healthy choice the easy choice in ACT public schools. This requires action by the whole school community.

Why focus on schools?

The ACT Government's *Towards Zero Growth: Healthy Weight Action Plan* identifies key actions for schools. This is because sound nutrition and exercise habits, if learned early, can make a lasting contribution to good health throughout life. Schools are in an influential position to promote and contribute to the health of children, young people, school staff and the wider community. They can create an environment that teaches and promotes healthy eating and physical activity.

The World Health Organisation describes a health promoting school as one that takes account of the physical, emotional and social needs of the whole school community. Such a school fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal. It has the following components in place:

- Health education curriculum
- School health services
- A healthy environment
- Health education and promotion for staff, parents and the community
- Food services
- Physical education
- Counselling and psychological services
- School and community health events
- Policies and procedures that protect health standards



Consistent messages in schools

Principals and teachers are encouraged to promote consistent messages about healthy food and drink choices in all school activities. The *ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy 2015* supports this by applying healthy standards to school canteens, excursions, school community events, fundraising activities and classroom activities.

Factsheets and frequently asked questions on the Policy can be found in the *ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy 2015* Factsheet and on the ACT Education and Training Directorate's website.

Ideas for promoting a healthy school environment

Fresh Tastes: healthy food at school

Fresh Tastes: healthy food at school is a free and optional service available to any school in the ACT. The service can help schools implement the *ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy* by providing a range of resources, training, advice and assistance. *Fresh Tastes* is provided by ACT Health with the support of the wider ACT Government and local community and business organisations to embed a healthy food and drink environment at school. Nutrition education and parent involvement are key principles of the program. ACT schools are invited to get involved by contacting *Fresh Tastes*. Email freshtastes@act.gov.au or visit www.health.act.gov.au/freshtastes

ACT Health Promotion Grants Program

The ACT Health Promotion Grants Program (ACTHPGP) contributes to improving health outcomes and minimising the risk of developing chronic disease in the ACT population. Grants are provided through the Healthy Canberra Grants and the Health Promotion Innovation Fund to community-based organisations. Schools can apply for grants to implement activities that support primary focus areas. This includes supporting improved healthy food and drink choices. For information visit www.health.act.gov.au and search for 'health promotion grants'.

Theme days

The school can become involved in, and promote a healthy event that is happening in the community, such as Heart Week, Harmony Day, Fruit and Vegetable month, World Mental Health Day, Girls Night In, Injury Free Day. More ideas can be found on the National Calendar www.nationalcalendar.com.au International Observances can be found at www.un.org/en/events/observances/days and include World Water Day, International Day of Happiness, World Health Day, World Food Day and many others.

Individual classes may design and run school-wide activities that promote awareness of a particular nutrition or health issue.

Some ideas:

- A dress up or colour day – red for Heart Week
- Design a poster competition to promote a nutritional or health message
- Healthy cook-off competition using a particular healthy food or ingredient
- Active team events
- Information for the school newsletter
- Support from the canteen for a theme day with relevant foods
- Contact your local newspaper for a media release





Whole-of-school healthy breakfast

Ask local businesses to donate healthy foods or offer a discounted price and hold a whole-of-school breakfast. You could approach the local bakery, delicatessen, fruit and vegetable shop or supermarket. Your canteen manager may have ideas about who is best to approach. Organisations that provide support can be thanked and promoted in the school publications and sent certificates of appreciation.

Alternatively, allocate classes different responsibilities for providing foods and making parts of the breakfast, or charge a small fee to help with the costs.

You could start the day with a morning activity such as a brisk walk, 'Jump Rope For Heart' activities, a fun run or other games or you could invite local sporting identities to conduct the activity sessions.

Discuss possible follow-up activities in class.

Nutrition Education

ACT public schools deliver the *Australian Curriculum* which includes the *Health and Physical Education* learning area. The *Health and Physical Education* topics directly cover health and nutrition and schools also make the links into other curriculum areas such as history, science, geography and technology and to gardening and cooking activities in the school. There are a range of resources to support teachers to deliver nutrition education in the learning program.

Food&ME™ is a *Fresh Tastes* resource developed by Nutrition Australia ACT that supports teachers to deliver nutrition education to students from Kindergarten to Year 8. The units are linked to the **Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education** and align with the **Australian Dietary Guidelines (2013)**. To download the *Food&ME™* resources for free visit www.health.act.gov.au/freshtastes



Parent education and involvement

Learning is strengthened when schools engage and involve parents.

Examples of activities that promote parent involvement in school health activities include:

- Parent education evenings (or series of evenings) presenting an overview of the health curriculum and inviting guest speakers. Parents may be interested in the range of activities and approaches the school is taking to implement the *ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy 2015*. Ask parents about other health topics they might like to learn about in future education evenings.



- Classroom healthy cooking sessions involving parent volunteers.
- Organise a workshop on healthy lunchbox ideas for parents (see References section of this factsheet).
- Invite parent participation in whole-of-school health promotion events such as Heart Week and World Food Day.
- Use the school newsletter to keep parents informed of health promotion events and encourage their involvement.
- Healthy recipes for lunchboxes and meals from the Nutrition Australia web site at www.nutritionaustralia.org/act or the NSW Government website www.healthy-kids.com.au Recipes contributed by other members of the school community. Don't forget to acknowledge the source.



References and Resources

The ACT Government *Towards Zero Growth, Healthy Weight Action Plan*, www.health.act.gov.au

Fresh Tastes: healthy food at school – information from www.health.act.gov.au/freshtastes

International Observances www.un.org/en/events/observances/days

National Calendar of events www.nationalcalendar.com.au

National Healthy School Canteens: Guidelines for healthy foods and drinks supplied in school canteens, updated 2013 www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-nutrition-canteens

WA Department of Education Factsheets, *Healthy Food and Drink Choices in Schools*.

<http://det.wa.edu.au>

World Health Organisation *What is a health promoting school?* www.who.int/school_youth_health