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The Issues:

- Eating habits of children and youth

The Consequences:

- Childhood and adult obesity
- Chronic disease risk

The Goal:

- A "Whole School" approach to nutrition

Canadian Community Health Survey (2004):

- **62%** of boys and **68%** of girls aged 9-13 were below the recommended minimum number of vegetable and fruit servings
- **61%** of boys and **83%** of girls aged 10-14 were below the recommended minimum number of milk product servings
- **27%** of calories consumed were for snack foods, most high in calories, fat, salt and/or sugar

In grade 6 (Health Canada 2004):

- **38%** of boys and **36%** of girls ate chocolate or candy five days per week or more
- **31%** of boys and **28%** of girls ate french fries twice per week or more
- **22%** of boys and **33%** of girls did not eat breakfast on all five weekdays

Canadian Community Health Survey (2004):

- **26%** of Canadian children and adolescents aged 2 to 17 years were overweight or obese
- For adolescents aged 12 to 17 years, the overweight/obesity rate more than doubled compared to 25 years ago

Impacts on Learning:

- Lower test and reading scores
- More behaviour problems
- Difficulty concentrating, solving problems & remembering information
- More sickness and absenteeism

Short Term Health Impacts:

- Iron deficiency anemia
- Overweight and obesity
- Dental caries

Long Term Health Impacts:

- Chronic diseases – type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease

Unequal Impacts

Low income and marginalized communities are at greater risk:

- 1 in 10 households in Toronto were food insecure in 2004
- Nutritious Food Basket survey consistently indicate that minimum wages and social assistance incomes are insufficient to cover the cost of healthy eating in Toronto
- Household food security and socioeconomic status linked to nutrient intake and eating habits

A "Whole School" Approach

- 1) Health curriculum that includes nutrition education
- 2) Nutritious food at school
- 3) School environment that supports healthy eating
- 4) Community partnerships



"Whole School" Approach

1) Health curriculum that includes nutrition education

- Ontario health and physical education curriculum for grade 1-8 integrates nutrition education into the health content
- Public health offers:
  - curriculum-based support for teachers
  - referral to other recommended curriculum resources

"Whole School" Approach

2) Nutritious food at school

- Nutrition standards for:
  - school cafeterias
  - vending machines
  - canteens and tuck shops
- Challenges:
  - financial viability
  - funding dependence
  - off-property retail



"Whole School" Approach

2) Nutritious food at school (cont'd)

- Student Nutrition Programs – provincial, municipal, parent funding
- Toronto: over 90,000 children and youth in over 500 programs in schools and community sites
- Better funding and standards nationally



3) School environment that supports healthy eating

- Support for parents
- Role-modelling
- School gardens
- Healthy food promotion in cafeterias
- Healthy fundraising options
- Special food days and events
- No commercial food marketing to children

4) Community partnerships

- Curriculum and policy support
- School-level committees – parents, teachers, agencies (Toronto Schools on the Move, Health Action Teams)
- School Gardens - Toronto Heart Health Partnership
- Health Assessment – the power of local data

- Mandatory comprehensive nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold and served in elementary and secondary schools (Bill 8 Ontario Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools Act)
- National publicly funded school food program
- Local school health assessments – student health and school environments
- Support for schools – funding, partnerships

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