

# Health Professionals Take the Challenge

## DID YOU KNOW?

Clinical interventions as brief as 3 minutes can motivate patients to change.

Close to 60% of patients want more information on nutrition and physical activity.

Research about local Grade 1 children shows:

- half may not be meeting Health Canada's physical activity and nutrition guidelines
- 1 in 4 do not have a healthy weight
- children's eating and activity choices are influenced by family mealtimes, schools, foods eaten away from home, TV and computer time, parents' physical activity, and neighbourhood recreational space

*Patients trust the advice of health professionals.* As a health professional, you are uniquely positioned to help them understand the importance of good lifestyle habits. Brief clinical interventions with your patients encourage them to take positive action towards health. Patient success can be further enhanced by complementing your lifestyle counselling with physical activity and healthy eating resources and with referrals to community programs.

Your professional guidance combined with increasingly supportive environments across our county makes healthy eating and activity choices easier. By working together we can ensure that children develop healthy habits that are carried into adulthood to build a lifetime of good health.

## What Can Health Professionals Do?

**Be aware**  
*of the benefits of  
physical activity and  
healthy eating*

- ☐ Stay current on the latest information about physical activity healthy eating and prevention of chronic disease.
- ☐ Engage patients in healthy lifestyle counselling using credible sources.
  - College of Family Physicians of Canada, physical activity/nutrition resources ([www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca))
  - Canadian Paediatric Association, physical activity/nutrition resources ([www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca))
  - PACE Canada, *Physical Activity and Nutrition Kit (tools and counselling guide)* ([www.pace-canada.org](http://www.pace-canada.org))
  - Simcoe County District Health Unit, *Brief Clinical Interventions for Healthier Lifestyles—Health Professionals' Tool*. Call Health Connection for a free copy.
- ☐ Check out what your patients are learning from credible websites.
  - Simcoe County District Health Unit ([www.simcoehealth.org](http://www.simcoehealth.org))
  - Health Canada ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca))
  - Dietitians of Canada ([www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca))
  - Canadian Health Network ([www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca))
- ☐ Attend professional development sessions that feature speakers on preventive health research and best practice interventions.

## What Can Health Professionals Do?

### Make it easy

*to eat healthy and be active every day*

- Make healthy lifestyle counselling (primary prevention) a regular part of patient care to motivate them to improve eating and activity habits.
- Prescribe Health Canada's physical activity and healthy eating guides and support your recommendations with age-appropriate patient resources.
- Refer patients to community events, workshops, community nutrition programs, and recreation facilities ([www.communityconnection.net](http://www.communityconnection.net)).
- Talk to parents about how they can balance the influence of the food industry and media on their children's food preferences.
- Provide resources and support to new mothers to breastfeed exclusively, and then introduce other foods at 6 months, with continued breastfeeding.
- Provide a brochure rack with patient information such as:
  - *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* (and preschoolers guide)
  - *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* (and youth and adult guides)
  - *Who decides what your child eats—the media, the food industry or you?*
  - *Walk This Way* bookmark
  - *Ready, Steady, Walk* brochure

### Be involved

*with your community to support healthy lifestyles*

- Be a positive role model and educate others about healthy lifestyle counselling at physician rounds/professional meetings, and with students you are mentoring.
- Offer to be a speaker at community events that promote physical activity and healthy eating, and encourage patients to attend.
- Be a champion. Volunteer at community initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and challenge your peers to get involved.

### Speak out

*for changes that will make your community a healthier place to live*

- Lobby your professional associations and colleges for increased education, training and resources to support you in promoting a healthy lifestyle to your patients.
- Urge politicians to make decisions that support healthy eating and physical activity in your community such as: compulsory physical activity in all schools for all ages; eliminating the sale of all soft drinks and limit foods that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt in schools; and construction of safe recreational facilities such as parks, bike paths, and trails.
- Lend your support to local associations who are working with politicians for changes to make communities healthier.

Health Connection is your phone or web link to updates and quick answers about current public health issues that affect your patients. Access the professional and patient resources referred to on this fact sheet and much more. Find out about community resources to support patients in their efforts to make healthy choices. You can speak one-to-one with a public health professional Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., or visit the health unit web site.

Call or Click:

**HEALTH CONNECTION**

■ 721-7520 ■ 1-877-721-7520

■ [www.simcoehealth.org](http://www.simcoehealth.org)