



Pop does not steal calcium out of bones, but it does replace milk as a drink. Many kids and adults drink more pop than milk!

Regular pop has a lot of added sugar. One 600mL bottle of pop a day for 1 year – more than 22 kg of sugar, 89,000 calories...

## How Sweet It is!

### What Schools Need To Know About Sugar and Artificial Sweeteners

#### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH SUGAR?

A little bit is fine when it's used to make nutritious foods. But sugar provides "empty calories" that can displace vitamins and minerals. For example, pop drinkers are more likely to have a low intake of calcium and other nutrients. Also, students who sip on sugary drinks or graze on high sugar foods are at a higher risk for tooth decay.

#### HOW MUCH IS A LOT OF SUGAR!

The World Health Organization recommends that no more than 10 per cent of our calories should come from added sugars. For younger students, that can mean as little as 10 teaspoons worth. That leaves very little room for sugary drinks or candies, but it is ample for kids to enjoy nutritious foods with some sweetening.

#### HOW DO WE KNOW IF A DRINK IS REAL JUICE OR FLAVOURED SUGAR-WATER?

Read the label and check the ingredient list. In Canada, only 100% juice can be called "100% Juice". Words such as "drink", "blend", "beverage", "cocktail", "splash" or "contains/made with 100% juice" etc. mean sugar has been added. Don't be fooled by other drink names, labels, or container shapes. They are carefully designed to attract kids and small amounts of juice or herbs might be added to entice adults. Be careful of "natural" sounding names like honey, corn syrup, rice syrup, etc. too. These are all just different names for sugar.

#### IS FRUIT JUICE BETTER THAN OTHER SWEET DRINKS?

Fruit juice contains some of the natural vitamins, minerals and fibre found in fruit, so it is a better choice. However:

- ✓ It's too easy to drink 2-4 pieces of fruit's worth of juice and consume too many calories.
- ✓ Juice has the same effect on teeth as other sugary drinks.

#### WHAT ABOUT FRUIT?

Children should have fruit more often than juice. When children eat a piece of fruit, they get all of its vitamins, minerals and fibre.

#### DOES SUGAR EFFECT BEHAVIOUR?

The studies tell us "no", but teachers tell us "yes"! Is it just because children feel gleeful when they get a treat? Are some children sensitive to the colours or flavours in most sugary items? Is it the caffeine in chocolate and some drinks?

#### OR DOES SUGAR REALLY AFFECT THE BRAIN?

A student's brain needs glucose (sugar) to fuel its thinking processes. Both complex carbohydrates and sugars are digested to create glucose to fuel the brain. Sugar by itself provides a short rush of brain fuel. This is why children might get tired or grumpy soon after having a sugary item.

Protein, fat or fibre eaten with carbohydrates or sugars gives the brain a steadier energy supply for a longer time. This might explain why a child who just ate a healthy snack seems better behaved than a child who just had a sugary item.



Quench your  
students'  
thirst with:

1. Unlimited  
plain water

2. Milk, plain  
or flavoured\*

3. Limited  
amounts of  
100% juice or  
calcium fortified  
100% juice\*

\* see the 2010 Guidelines  
for Food and Beverage  
Sales in BC Schools

### WHAT ABOUT ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS?

While Health Canada has approved their use in small amounts for school age children, the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* (2010, BC Ministry of Education & Ministry of Health) call for elementary and middle schools to eliminate all artificially sweetened products. To help prevent teenagers from getting used to sweet-tasting non-nutritious items, secondary schools should also minimize sales of these foods and beverages.

#### **Sugar Maximum: 10% of Calories**

	Boys	Girls
Years of Age	cubes	or teaspoons
4-8 years	11	10
9-13 years	14	13
14-18 years	20	15

### WHAT DOES A "SMALL AMOUNT" OF ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER LOOK LIKE?

The Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for aspartame for children ranges from 640-2680 mg/day, depending on their body weight. One tablet or packet of aspartame contains 15-35 mg of aspartame and could be considered a "small amount" for most children. Diet pop has the equivalent of 4-9 packets/tablets of aspartame in a 355mL can, or 6-15 packets/tablets in a 600mL bottle.

This represents a larger portion of the ADI for children and is one reason why the *Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools* (2010, BC Ministry of Education & Ministry of Health) require that diet drinks be removed from elementary and middle schools. For other foods and drinks, read the labels to find out how much artificial sweetener has been added and compare it to the ADI.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ✓ Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools (2010, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health)  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/healthy\\_eating/food\\_guidelines/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/healthy_eating/food_guidelines/)
- ✓ Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC (8-1-1)  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)
- ✓ Centre For Science in the Public Interest, "Liquid Candy", 2005,  
[www.cspinet.org/liquidcandy/index.html](http://www.cspinet.org/liquidcandy/index.html)