



# The Latest from Child Care Licensing

Spring 2011 Edition

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## A Message from the Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing

We are happy to bring you this spring newsletter which is bursting with information on healthy eating and active living for children. This newsletter was inspired by the fact that March was Nutrition month and so we enlisted one of our population health dietitians, Sherry Ogasawara, to provide us with two inspiring articles. In this issue, you will learn about the lessons that can be learned by children when they help with food preparation. She also shares some useful tips for getting children excited and involved in the “celebration of food”.

Sherry also wrote an article that highlights new “sedentary behavior guidelines”. New information takes a direct aim at the youngest members of our society and suggests limits for screen time. In keeping with these important messages, we are also sharing the findings of a UBC study which focused on the outdoor play experiences for children in daycare. Of note, the expensive fixed equipment, that seemed to be an expected part of an outdoor play space, is proving to contribute far less to the play experience than a child’s imagination and exploration of the world around them. I hope you will take a moment to read through the findings of this study when you have a moment.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of the newsletter; if you have any comments or suggestions for future articles, we would welcome your ideas.

Sharlene Lively  
Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing

# CELEBRATE FOOD! . . . FROM FIELD TO TABLE

The early learning environment offers an ideal opportunity for practitioners to explore nutrition month's "field to table" concept and theme involving not only children in care but outreaching to their families as well.

Whether nutrition month, or anytime it is important to make it a priority to get into the kitchen. The process of cooking together offers opportunity to utilize the tremendous variety of nutritious ingredients available in BC and to learn about food economics and food culture. Teaching food preparation and nurturing a respect for wholesome ingredients will nourish children, families and communities while preserving the art of food preparation for generations to come. Dietitians of Canada's National Nutrition Month 2011 invited Canadians from coast to coast to "celebrate food" - right from where's its grown and harvested all the way to delicious and healthy food on our tables.



Food preparation also provides 'real life' examples reinforcing lessons presented in more formal educational settings. It is a practical way to bring the classroom into the kitchen...consider various subject areas and see how the learning translates.

- Health: learning how to make a healthy meal or snack and how these foods help our bodies grow and develop, discover new foods kids love to eat.
- Language: reading a recipe, writing a list of what needs to be purchased, asking questions, learning new vocabulary and following guided instructions to result in tasty outcomes.
- Math: Counting, sorting, measuring and working with fractions to figure out how much of something is needed or how many servings will actually be the yield to serve "x" number of people.
- Science: discovering and testing predictions. What will happen when a certain ingredient is included or what will happen once something is put into the oven?
- Social Studies: discovering where certain foods come from, finding out more about our own and other ethnic cuisines from around the globe. Food offers a fantastic way to celebrate and express our diversity.
- Physical Activity: small and large muscle and motor control by stirring, chopping kneading, pouring and scooping.
- Social Skills and Communication: working together and building teamwork, taking turns to take part, sharing utensils and equipment.

Food handling and the related skills required in cooking vary based on the age and stage individual children are at. Generally, children over the age of two can learn to help based on both physical ability and the ability to follow direction. Refer to Food Flair Information Sheet "What Can Children Do in the Kitchen?" found on pages 81-82 of Food Flair Early Learning Practitioner's Resource [http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap\\_bc/](http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap_bc/) for an age breakdown/skills chart.

Here are some useful tips to serve as a starting point to sharing in the celebration of food by getting everyone involved in mealtimes and learning more about where our food comes from.

1. Get your green thumb going. Plant a family garden. If you don't have space or a backyard to do this check to see if you can participate in a community garden. Vegetables like tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, peas and beans are easy for beginning gardeners to grow. You can even plant them in pots and containers. Herbs are something which can be grown all year round indoors.
2. Visit a local farmer's market. Most markets start up in the late spring and last until fall. Some communities even have markets that move indoors during the winter months. While at the market have the kids choose a new fruit or vegetable they have never tried before. Ask the farmer about some ideas on the best way to prepare it.
3. Get your kids excited about food and where it comes from. Visit a berry farm, a pumpkin patch or a fruit orchard.
4. Play a guessing game with the kids to have them identify where different foods are grown across Canada. Take advantage of BC's seasonal offerings. Look for rhubarb and asparagus in the spring, corn and tomatoes in the summer and squash in the fall. Check the information sheet entitled "Seasonally Available BC Vegetables and Fruits" on pages 45-46 of Food Flair Early Learning Practitioner's Resource ([http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap\\_bc/](http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap_bc/))
5. The new Dietitians of Canada cookbook *Cook!* is a great resource to start the process. It features over 275 recipes which were contributed by Canadian consumers and dietitians. All of the recipes were tested for taste and nutrition. *Cook!* is available at your local bookstore or library.
6. Plan a menu together. Think of the week ahead and look through your favorite cookbooks, magazines and online. Let each family member pick one meal for the week which they have to help prepare.
7. Invite an elder or grandparents in to showcase the diverse cultural connections of children in care. Preparing and sharing foods from different cultures and generations is a tie that binds us to our roots.
8. Start a dialogue by talking to families about the importance of eating together but, be realistic. Busy schedules may

mean it's a challenge. Try to encourage them to pick a few meals where can have the majority of their crew sitting down together to enjoy good food and conversation. It doesn't always have to be dinner. Lunch or brunch on weekends or even a quick few minutes at breakfast on weekdays is great. Research shows when families eat together kids are more likely to eat better - especially more vegetables, fruits and dairy.

It is time to be more connected to the food we eat and for all of us to celebrate the efforts that go into the production of a meal from field to table. Keep this in mind... "You are making more than meals together, you are making memories"!

For more information, visit Northern Health Community Nutrition at: [www.northernhealth.ca/YourHealth/HealthyLivingCommunities/Nutrition.aspx](http://www.northernhealth.ca/YourHealth/HealthyLivingCommunities/Nutrition.aspx) or Dietitians of Canada at [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca) or the Better Together website which is <http://bettertogetherbc.ca/>

\*Food Flair Early Learning Practitioner's Resource is available at a cost of \$26.54 plus shipping from Pegwood Educational. E-mail is [pegwood@telus.net](mailto:pegwood@telus.net).

## THE LOWDOWN ON THE NATION'S SLOWDOWN

Believe it or not Canadian youngsters spend almost 62 percent of their waking hours being sedentary!

In response to this alarming statistic, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiologists (CSEP) has just introduced a new set of sedentary behavior guidelines which take aim at the youngest members of our society suggesting limits for sitting idle and spending time glued to the television, computer and gaming screens. Yes, you heard it correctly..."sedentary guidelines"!

The Canadian Sedentary Behavior Guidelines, the first, systematic evidence based sedentary behavior guidelines in the world state "for health benefits, children (aged 5 to 11 years) and youth aged (12 to 17 years) should limit recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day. Children and youth should also limit sedentary transport, prolonged sitting and time spent indoors throughout the day".

Scientific evidence has shown a direct connection between increased sedentary time and decreased fitness, poor self-esteem, weak academic performance, obesity and increased aggression.

Healthy active living requires a 'whole day' lifestyle approach to be a priority with parents, caregivers and teachers acting as primary role models. The Sedentary Behavior Guidelines for Children and Youth are complementary to the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines released in January of 2011. The two guidelines were intended to mirror each other as a recipe for families and community leaders to optimize health and social benefits for the next generation.

Besides the fact so many children and youth engage in sedentary behaviors detrimental to healthy growth and development only 9 percent of boys and 4 percent of girls accumulate the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity a day the new guidelines call for.

These two new sets of guidelines are the result of over 4 years of research and provide clear, concise instruction and tips for all Canadians regardless of age or skill level to achieve the recommended amounts of physical activity.

The missing piece in both sets of guidelines is clear directives targeted towards preschool children. One reason for the absence of a clear set of recommendations is the lack of scientific research and evidence documenting the health effects of physical activity in preschoolers. It's likely the assumption is preschoolers instinctually move more than enough to acquire sufficient levels of physical activity. However, this is not the case as television, video games and busy schedules can fill a child's day so there is little time for play or physical activity."

Although Health Canada has not made official recommendations for the amount and types of physical activity to promote healthy growth and development during the toddler and preschool years, here are some general guidelines:

- Toddlers need opportunities for active play and exposure to active role models
- Every day preschoolers need at least 60 minutes of structure physical activity and 60 minutes or several hours of unstructured physical activity.

Structured physical activity includes games and activities you teach to children or do with them. This helps children learn what they can do. It helps them develop movement skills, and it also helps them learn to get along with others. Examples include walking, swimming, biking, gymnastics, active games or sports.

Unstructured physical activity (also referred to as active play) is supervised time for children to play actively alone or with other children. This is physically active time when children decide what to do and how to do it, usually without direct help from an adult. Examples include playing inside or outside, on play structures, building forts and running and jumping.



Use the following tips to encourage physical activity:

1. **Encourage all types of activity:** All movement is good movement. Encourage a variety of activities. Avoid comments about what little boys or little girls should and shouldn't do. Introduce children to men and women in the community who are physically active. Don't forget to role model yourself.
2. **Keep things safe, simple and sound:** Children are easy to please when it comes to activities. Simple movement is fun and cost effective. Ensure children are dressed for activity, in shoes they can run in and clothes they can get dirty in. Photograph the children being active and display the pictures. Plan outings that offer physical activity. Visit playgrounds, trails, parks. Attend community events that have physical activity for children. Think and be active.
3. **Try new things:** Variety and creativity are key. Choose activities that are suitable to the time of year and resources available.
  - Try different activities that focus on:
  - Endurance - running, jumping and swimming to strengthen the heart and lungs
  - Flexibility - gymnastics and dancing encourage bending, stretching and reaching.
  - Strength - climbing builds strong muscles and bones.
  - Make it more important to participate and develop skills than win or get results.
4. **Weather the weather:** Children need activity every day so incorporate outdoor time even if it is raining or snowy. Dress for the weather and go outside. Winter is such a great time for children to explore and learn outdoors. Build snowmen, snow angels or make patterns walking in the fresh snow.
5. **Take breaks:** Keep in mind active children need to take frequent breaks for a drink of water and to cool down. Follow children's lead.

For more information on HOP resources visit: [http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap\\_bc/](http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap_bc/)

And for more information about the "Moving and Growing" series by the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Canadian Institute of Child Health visit: [http://www.cich.ca/Publications\\_childdevelopment.html#movinggrowing](http://www.cich.ca/Publications_childdevelopment.html#movinggrowing)

To download copies of both sets of guidelines visit: [www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines).

## OUTDOOR PLAY SPACE STUDY

### UBC Studies the Design of Outdoor Playspaces in Child Care Settings.

Children in care may spend the majority of their waking hours at their day care centres. Gross motor play and access to outdoor play spaces can potentially offer valuable experiences to children. Recent studies have found that gross motor movement is decreasing among young children, contributing to obesity in school children. In this study, researchers asked, "Which outdoor physical factors contribute to early childhood development and quality play at child cares centres?"

Specifically, the researchers studied

- The size of playspace and where children played in the space
- The types of play observed in different play environments
- What staff and children enjoy about their current outdoor play spaces.
- The presence of living things in the outdoor play environment
- The amount of manipulable materials in the outdoor play environment

*So what did they find?*

Although the study includes a comprehensive list of findings, the researchers emphasized that children need more space. Child care centres with smaller play areas or play areas that lacked living things and manipulable materials experienced more aggression amongst the children.

More importantly however, they found that quality outdoor play means more than play equipment. In the centres that had fixed play equipment such as expensive climbers, the equipment was unoccupied 87% of the time. When the equipment was used by children, it was used as intended only 3% of the time.

Out of this study, an informational guide was developed to assist when developing young children's outdoor play spaces. If you are thinking of making changes to your outdoor play area, you might like to read this report; we have posted the document on our website <http://www.northernhealth.ca/YourHealth/CommunityCareLicensing.aspx>

