

ABC's of Health

a newsletter for elementary school educators

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ABC'S of Health is produced by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit for distribution to elementary school educators. Article submission is welcomed from educators, however, we reserve the right to edit as necessary. Articles may be reproduced provided the source is acknowledged. Articles for submission can be sent to 200 Rose Glen Rd., Port Hope, ON L1A 3V6 or faxed to (905) 885-9551, c/o The Editor-ABC'S of Health.



Striking a Healthy Balance with Balanced School Days

Some area elementary schools students are having to strike a new balance now that their schedule has changed dramatically.

A number of schools have adopted a Balanced School Day, bringing not only a different structure to the day, but also some significant issues related to children's health.

What is the Balanced School Day?

The Balanced School Day timetable divides the school day into three 100-minute blocks of instructional time. Two 40 to 50 minute nutrition breaks are provided - one between 10 am and 11 am and one between 1 pm and 2 pm. Nutrition breaks provide 20 to 25 minutes for eating, and 20 to 25 minutes are for supervised physical activity. This is an alternative to the traditional school day which provided a 15 minute recess in the morning and afternoon along with a one-hour lunch at noon.

The concept was started two years ago in Ontario at Caledon East Public School in Peel Region. The idea caught on and a number of school boards throughout the province have implemented the change.

Why change the schedule?

While there is little formal evidence to support one schedule over another, schools piloting the Balanced School Day have reported:

- an increase in the amount of instruction time. Instruction time lost to getting students ready to go outside is reduced by as much as 20 to 30 minutes by changing the number of breaks from three to two.
- increased safety for allergic students. With the Balanced School Day, all eating takes place inside the school. This reduces the amount of garbage outside, which attracts bees and creates a danger for anaphylactic students.
- a reduction in student misbehaviour. With the Balanced School Day, there is a reduction in the amount of time students are unsupervised when playing outdoors.
- an increase in student learning and attention. There were fewer interruptions of instructional time due to the reduction of breaks.

As with any change to the school day, parents and educators are bound to have a number of questions. While some areas of concern, such as nutrition, playground safety and physical activity, are addressed in this edition of *ABC's of Health*, educators are invited to contact the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577 for any additional information. ✍



Physical Activity and the Balanced School Day

Implementing a Balanced School Day can help increase the amount of physical activity students have each day.

By changing the schedule, students have more opportunities to pursue extracurricular and intramural activities. As well, there are now two times each day for team practices instead of one lunch hour!

Other benefits reported by schools that have changed to this schedule include increased physical fitness, greater use of the gym and less sun exposure during the noon hours.



- don't misconstrue the "free play" during these breaks as Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE). Students still need 30 minutes of QDPE every day.
- ensure that your students have the knowledge and the skills to be physically active during these breaks. Try teaching recess games during physical education classes.
- check out playground game resources at www.intramurals.ca
- download a **free** copy of "Recess Revival" at www.mohawkc.on.ca/external/cira
- use this opportunity to enhance your students' and parents' understanding of the importance of physical activity and reinforce the messages in *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*.

To learn more about increasing physical activity opportunities at the school, contact the Health Unit toll-free at 1-866-888-4577. 📞

Keeping School Lunches Healthy

The best way to prevent foodborne illness is to ensure all food is handled and prepared with care.

While caution is important in preparing any foods, it is extremely important when it comes to preparing and storing lunches for school.

Follow these tips when preparing and storing bagged and boxed lunches to prevent foodborne illness.

Pack 'Em Safely

- Wash hands with soap and warm water before, during and after preparing food.
- Pack foods such as deli meats, tuna, egg salad and milk with a small freezer pack in an insulated lunch box or bag.
- Wash all vegetables and fruit thoroughly.
- Freeze juice boxes and



yogurt to help keep lunches cool.

- Prepare meat sandwiches and other food to be kept cool the night before. Leave them in the refrigerator to chill

well.

- Make sure hot foods are steaming hot when they are put in a thermos.
- Use fresh ingredients or leftovers that are not more than one day old.
- Clean lunch boxes or bags, food containers and all utensils every day.
- Food wrappings should not be reused. They can carry bacteria.

To learn more about preventing foodborne illness, contact the Health Unit toll-free at 1-866-888-4577. 📞

Active Participation (Quality Daily Physical Education Tip)



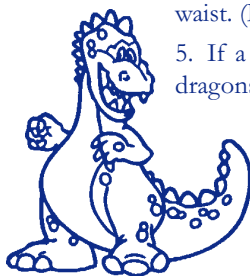
Dodging Dragons (Grades 1-8)

Equipment Needed:

Four pieces of cloth (e.g., dish towel) for dragon tails

Procedure:

1. Divide students into four teams.
2. Have students on each team stand one behind the other and hold onto the waist of the wizard in front of them. The last wizard in each line is the tail of the dragon and tucks the tail (cloth) halfway into their waistband. (Half the tail should be visible)
3. The wizard at the back must protect the tail. The wizard at the front of the line is the dragon's head. This wizard must chase after and capture the tails of the other dragons. The dragons **MUST** stay together. (If the dragons come apart they cannot capture the tails of other dragons.)
4. When a tail is captured, it is passed back to the last wizard to tuck into his/her waist. (Dragons can have multiple tails at one time.)
5. If a dragon loses a tail, they may continue to chase after other dragons to capture a new tail.
6. The game is over when one dragon has all four tails (or exhausted!).



Option - Award points for each tail captured or take points away if dragons come apart. 📞



Congratulations to Cindy Barrett!

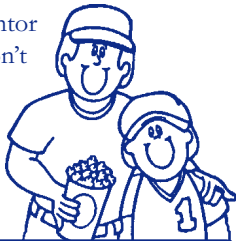
Congratulations to *ABC's of Health* reader Cindy Barrett from Langton Public School in Fenelon Falls. Cindy took the time to send in a readers survey last spring and was the winner of a gift certificate to Bennett's Restaurant in Fenelon Falls.

A special thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey. Your comments are appreciated. 🍷

Drug Awareness Week: November 16 to 22, 2003

"Growing up is Risky Business" is this year's theme for Drug Awareness Week. The week encourages parents and mentors to be there for youth. Adults have a role to play, whether it be talking, teaching or providing youth with a "Phone Me Card" to use when things don't turn out as planned. The message to youth, "The world is a party tonight....and anything can happen," encourages them to have a plan and call a parent or mentor when things don't turn out as planned.

For more information,



Phone Me Card

Call me if you need help, anytime, anywhere – no lectures, no hassles.

Name _____

Phone _____

check out www.odap.org or call the Health Unit toll-free at 1-866-888-4577. 🍷

Nutrition and the Balanced School Day

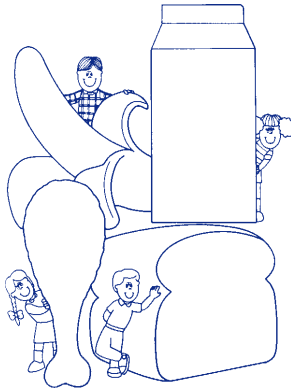
Educators may be the first person parents turn to with questions about what the Balanced School Day will mean for their children's nutrition.

Below are a few commonly asked questions and answers to help you address their concerns.

Is there time for children to get enough nutritious food on the Balanced School Day schedule?

Yes. At first glance, two 20 to 25 minute nutrition breaks (for a total of 40 to 50 minutes) may seem like significantly less time for eating than the traditional noon-hour lunch. The reality is that many students spent most of their lunch hour either walking to and from home, or rushing through their lunch to get out on the playground. With the Balanced School Day, time is set aside specifically for eating.

What food should I pack?



With a traditional lunch hour, it is recommended that lunches include at least one serving of food from each of the four food groups in *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. As the Balanced School Day splits lunch into two nutritional breaks, parents should ensure all four food groups are consumed over the course of the day. This means that during each nutrition break, students should eat foods from at least three of the four food groups. See the fact sheet *Healthy Eating for Balanced School Day*, included with this issue for more information about how to pack for nutrition breaks.

Will it cost more?

Under the traditional school schedule, parents would have provided students with food for the lunch break as well as snacks for the morning and afternoon recess. With the Balanced School Day, food can be redistributed into two substantial snacks so parents shouldn't have to provide more food. However, the types of foods parents provide could affect the cost. Convenience foods cost more and also tend to be less nutritious. See the fact sheet *Convenience Food Knockout*, included in this issue for more information on how to reduce cost and increase the nutrient value of the foods sent to school.

How can the Balanced School Day help teach students about healthy eating?

While there may be some challenges implementing the Balanced School Day, the change can also provide some positive learning outcomes. As a result of Balanced School Days, educators will have additional opportunities during snack times to teach students about healthy eating. This will ensure teachers meet the Healthy Eating strand of the Health and Physical Education section of the Ontario Curriculum.

Is there help available?

Any change in routine can be challenging. The local Health Unit has many resources to support healthy eating education for students and parents. Registered Dietitians are also available for consultation. Contact the Health Unit toll-free at 1-866-888-4577 for more information. 🍷



Making Sure Students Play Safely on the Playground

Playgrounds are full of fun and games for children. But they can also pose dangers.

Each year, thousands of Canadian children get hurt at playgrounds playing on slides, monkey bars or swings. (Health Canada, Aug. 1999). The most common injuries are fractures, as approximately 75 per cent of all playground injuries occur as a result of falls. (Canadian Hospital Injury Reporting and Prevention Program, 2000). Children five to nine years of age tend to be the group most frequently injured on playgrounds.



Safe playground equipment and protective surfaces are essential in preventing injuries. Children need to be dressed

appropriately and items such as skipping ropes and helmets should never be used around playground equipment.

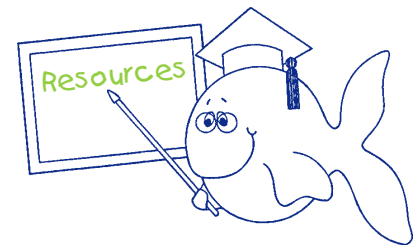
It is also important that children know and follow safety rules when using playground equipment.

Remind children to:

- wait their turn - one person at a time
- go down the slide down feet first
- sit down on swings and slides
- keep away from moving swings and the bottom of slides
- use two hands when swinging and climbing
- hold onto railings
- not push or play rough



To learn more about playground safety, contact the Health Unit toll-free at 1-866-888-4577.

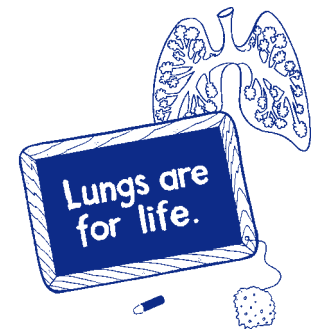


Lungs are for Life

Looking for an innovative and effective way to teach students about the health risks of smoking?

Health for Life can provide area teachers with the **Lungs are for Life** program. This respiratory health and smoking prevention program was first developed by the Lung Association and focuses specifically on meeting the expectations in the new Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum for both elementary and secondary schools. Health Canada has rated it one of the top three smoking prevention programs in the country.

The **Lungs are for Life** presentation



for Grade 4 students is very popular, using an interactive, visual presentation of pigs' lungs to illustrate the damage caused by tobacco smoke.

To learn more about the **Lungs are for Life** program or borrow resources, please contact *Health for Life* at 1-877-349-9902 or your local Health Unit office.



Health for Life Launches Party Packs

Want to add creative spark to the next event you organize for children and youth?

Health for Life is launching the new Party Pack based on the popular theme of wizards. The new Party Pack will contain everything you need to plan a party that includes a magical blast of active games, healthy snacks, and fun!

Read the Quality Daily Physical Education activity for a sample game from the Party Pack that is sure to get children fired up by "Dodging Dragons." To get your copy of the newly developed Party Pack, call *Health for Life* at 1-877-349-9902.

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