SPOTLIGHT ON WATER

Research and Resources on Water Access and Consumption from the Harvard Prevention Research Center on Nutrition & Physical Activity

Water is an ideal beverage choice for children and adults. It hydrates the body, is very low-cost, and is calorie-free. Limited access to water during school and outside of school hours can pose problems for children’s health, especially if there is easy access to high-calorie, sugary drinks such as soda, fruit drinks, sport drinks, fruit-ades and juice. The HPRC has published the following research and resources on water access and consumption.

Research:

School and Out of School Drinking Water Access

- Youth access to drinking water in schools may be limited:

- A low-cost intervention to promote the convenience of drinking water in schools nearly doubled the percentage of students drinking water, and increased the amount of water consumed:

- An evaluation found nearly 90 percent of Boston Public Schools were compliant with competitive beverage guidelines nine years after the district-wide policy was implemented:

- Evidence that the Out of School Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative (OSNAP) increases children’s water consumption during afterschool snack time and identifies contextual factors important for success:

- Evidence that implementing the Out of School Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative (OSNAP) is an effective strategy to increase water served to children during afterschool snack:
Water Access Policies and Laws

- This study provides evidence of public support for efforts to increase access to drinking water in schools and parks, and documents overall high levels of perceived taste and safety of water provided in these settings.

- Prior to 2010, few Massachusetts school district wellness policies addressed access to free drinking water. Water-provision strategies relying on tap water are more economical than bottled water in the long term:

- A description of the model code process and policy intervention points where the public health community can work to improve child drinking water access:

Water and Health

- An investigation found that an increase in water consumption can replace sugar-containing beverages, though there was no direct beneficial effect on body weight outcomes. However, as sugar-containing beverages were associated with weight gain, this replacement might explain the prevention of obesity through the promotion of water consumption:

- The finding that more than half of all children and adolescents in the United States are not adequately hydrated at any given time. Boys were 76% more likely than girls, and non-Hispanic blacks were 34% more likely than non-Hispanic whites, to be inadequately hydrated. Nearly a quarter of the children and adolescents in the study reported drinking no plain water at all.
    - [Research Summary]
Resources:

- **Keep it Flowing: A Practical Guide to School Drinking Water Planning, Maintenance, & Repair**
  
  o  This guide addresses the practical side of drinking water in schools by outlining the steps needed to provide adequate numbers of properly maintained drinking fountains and tap water dispensers in school buildings. It is designed for the people who make our nation’s schools run day-in and day-out, including those within state and tribal agencies and organizations, districts, school boards and local education authorities and schools.

- **Grab a Cup, Fill it Up!**
  
  o  Simple posters encouraging students to drink water and directing them to a water source location. These posters were used in a school-based cafeteria intervention that provided disposable cups near water fountains.

- **Out of School Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative (OSNAP)**
  
  o  An initiative designed to develop healthy habits related to healthy foods, drinks, and physical activity through sustainable policy and environmental strategies during out of school time programs. OSNAP promotes the following water access and healthy beverage goals:
    - “Serve water every day.”
    - “Do not serve sugary drinks.”
    - “Do not allow sugary drinks to brought in during program time.”
  
  o  OSNAP includes the following tools to facilitate water promotion:
    - Tip Sheets:  
      * Water, Water Everywhere!  
      * Sugar Sweetened Beverages  
    - Fast Maps for:  
      * Improving Water Consumption  
      * Eliminating Sugary Drinks from Snacks Served  
    - Policy Writing Guide for eliminating sugary drinks from being served and providing access to water  
    - Additional resources for healthy snacks and beverages, including a water pitcher sanitation guide

- **Food & Fun Afterschool**
  
  o  A curriculum designed to assist program staff in providing healthier environments to children during out-of-school time. Food & Fun Afterschool includes 11 teaching units that use both lessons and activities to encourage healthy behaviors through active play, literacy and math skills development, creative learning, and hands-on snack time activities. The following resources focus on water promotion and healthy beverage goals:
    - Unit 3: Be Sugar Smart
    - Unit 10: Hydration
      * Related Handout: Hydration
• **Eat Well & Keep Moving**
  o This [interdisciplinary elementary school program](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-issues/water-access-and-consumption/) designed to promote healthful eating and physical activities in school, home, and community environments, emphasizes water as one of its eight core Principles of Healthy Living, reflected throughout the curriculum: “Make the switch from sugary drinks to water.”
    ▪ Sample Lesson: [Healthy Living](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-issues/water-access-and-consumption/)

• **Planet Health**
  o An interdisciplinary curriculum focused on improving the health and well-being of sixth through eighth grade students while building and reinforcing skills in language arts, math, science, social studies, and physical education. The curriculum promotes choosing water instead of sugary drinks, a sample of which can be found in the following:
    ▪ Sample Lesson: [Passing the Sugar](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-issues/water-access-and-consumption/)
    ▪ Fact Sheet: [Healthy Hydration](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-issues/water-access-and-consumption/)
    ▪ Parent Newsletter: [Be Sugar Smart](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-issues/water-access-and-consumption/)