

## Healthy eating and nutrition: Patient education resources for BC physicians

**P**romoting healthy eating practices is key to reducing the risk and the incidence of chronic disease. Patients today are inundated with nutrition information, but unfortunately much of it is not medically sound. Physicians have a unique opportunity to provide patients with reliable information and resources that are appropriate for their individual needs, and to emphasize the importance of nutrition for improving health.

Here are some useful nutrition resources that are easily accessible:

### Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC

[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

Easy-to-use nutrition handouts containing information from the most current scientific sources. Physicians can call 8-1-1 to speak to a registered dietitian from Monday to Thursday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Patients can contact a registered dietitian for healthy eating advice by calling 8-1-1 or visiting [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/emaildietitian.html](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/emaildietitian.html).

### Healthy Families BC

[www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca)

Healthy Families BC, an initiative of the Ministry of Health, is a reliable, evidence-based resource where British Columbians can access a wide range of multimedia resources including articles, videos, and interactive features to support healthy food choices.

The Healthy Family BC website has tools to help patients reduce dietary sodium intake—a central strategy

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for reducing and preventing hypertension, stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease. We know that some sodium in our diet is necessary, but many British Columbians consume more than double the required amount. Here are some resources to help your patients achieve the 1500–2300 mg Health Canada target:

### There is an overwhelming amount of nutritional misinformation in the popular media.

- **Sodium Sense:** [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/sodium-sense](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/sodium-sense). An interactive tool that challenges visitors to select food items for meals and snacks, keeping within the daily sodium recommendation.
- **Educational articles:** [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sodium). Topics include salt basics, tips to lower dietary sodium, reading food labels, and appropriate salt consumption for kids.
- **Social media and blogs:** Healthy eating blogs on sodium reduction, as well as other topics, are posted by HealthLink BC Dietitian Services twice each week.

Reducing consumption of sugary drinks is another important nutrition-

al focus. Obesity continues to rise and sugary drinks can be a big contributor to the problem. To encourage your patients to avoid sugary beverages, you can refer them to the following resources on the Healthy Families BC website:

- **Sugary Drink Sense:** [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/sugary-drinks-how-much-sugar-are-you-drinking](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/sugary-drinks-how-much-sugar-are-you-drinking). This is an awareness tool that measures the amount of sugar in some common sugary drinks by the number of sugar cubes.
- **Educational articles:** [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sugary-drinks](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/sugary-drinks). Topics include switching to healthier beverages, sugary drink myth-busters, reading labels, and sugary drinks and kids.

With over 10 000 different items to choose from in the average grocery store, it can be challenging to make healthy, budget-wise food choices. Healthy Families BC has a great resource to help patients make healthy decisions while shopping for groceries:

- **Shopping Sense and the Virtual Grocery Store:** [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca). The link to the Virtual Grocery Store, found at the bottom of the webpage, takes users to a virtual shopping experience where they can learn from a registered dietitian how to read food labels, choose healthier fats, and increase their fibre intake, as well as other important healthy eating and safe food handling tips.

### Fact Sheet Generator

<http://bcfsg.dietitians.ca/>

This website was developed by Dietitians of Canada in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Health to enable health care professionals to customize

and print their own fact sheets on topics such as how to reduce sodium and sugary drink consumption. Coming 31 March 2013 there will be new fact sheets promoting healthy weights for parents and teens as well as on nutrition for babies and toddlers (0 to 24 months).

We hope that being aware of these resources and tools will help empower physicians to discuss nutrition with their patients. There is an overwhelming amount of nutritional misinformation in the popular media. As your patients' physician, don't miss the opportunity to help guide them to credible resources.

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**Recommended reading**

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