

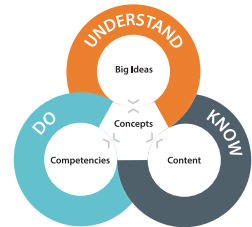
Health guidelines: Are they helpful?

We live in a world of ‘mixed signals’ about how to stay healthy and enjoy life and the risks and rewards of substance use. It can be hard to decide which suggestions are right.

Health related guidelines and recommendations have been developed by scientists and health researchers to help Canadians make decisions that promote health. But these guidelines often fail to acknowledge their own limitations or to place their recommendations within the context of broader social and political factors.

This lesson introduces some of these guidelines and recommendations that can provide a springboard for critically reviewing particular behaviours (eating, physical activity, substance use) and exploring how such guidelines might be useful in making decisions about health and well-being.

Rather than trying to “sell” students on a specific behaviour or belief, the learning activities should help students build the skills to explore and seek to understand and manage their own health.



Instructional strategies

1. Display or distribute copies of the [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#) and, using [think-pair-share](#), invite students to review and share their reflections on the guidelines using questions like:
 - To what extent do the guidelines align with what you might have expected to see?
 - Are there surprises in the information presented? If so, what?
 - Do you think these guidelines will make a difference? Why, or why not?

Then display or distribute copies of each of these substance use guidelines, and again have students discuss them using questions like those above as well as those provided below.

[Canada’s Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines](#)
[Canada’s Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#)
[Reality Check](#)

- What similarities and differences do you see between the various guidelines?
- What might account for these differences?

Share the following quote with students and ask them to consider it in light of their discussions about health guidelines.

“Neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it. All errors he is likely to commit against advice and warning are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to do what they deem his good.”

~John Stuart Mill

- How might we interpret John Stuart Mill’s statement in the context of the guidelines we have been considering?
- If we take Mill seriously, does that mean we must reject the guidelines? Explain.



- How might the guidelines be helpful? Unhelpful? Could they ever do harm? Explain.
- What kind of guidelines (if any) might be most helpful? What kind of guidelines (if any) might be most likely to cause harm?

2. Display or distribute copies of the [Holistic vision of health](#) handout. Have students work in pairs or small groups to consider the following questions and then have two pairs or groups share their ideas with each other before debriefing as a class.

- What does health mean to you? Why do you think WHO has included mental and social well-being in its definition of health?
- How can we improve our mental and social well-being in addition to our physical health? Do you think guidelines can help foster such forms of health?
- Can being committed to a particular healthy lifestyle (e.g., get 8-10 hours of sleep per night) have an effect on other dimensions of one's health and well-being? Explain.
- Can health be achieved simply by following rules/guidelines? Explain.

3. A BC student, (cited in [Talking about youth health](#), McCreary Centre Society, 2015), said,

"They tell you to drink responsibly but they don't tell you how to drink responsibly."

Using this quote engage students in a class discussion (or have them work in groups) to explore the following question:

- What knowledge and skills do you think students need in order to use cannabis or alcohol responsibly?

Drug literacy

Big ideas

- ✓ Drugs can be tremendously helpful and also very harmful
- ✓ As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage the drugs in our lives
- ✓ We can learn how to control our drug use by reflecting on the different ways people have thought about drugs, exploring stories from various cultures and listening to each other

Competencies

- ✓ explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- ✓ Recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- ✓ Develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs
- ✓ develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks, benefits and harms related to drugs



Links to curriculum

Physical and Health Education 9

Big idea

- ✓ Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional, and mental well-being

Competencies

Healthy and active living

- ✓ Participate daily in physical activity designed to enhance and maintain health components of fitness
- ✓ Describe how students' participation in physical activities at school, at home, and in the community can influence their health and fitness
- ✓ Propose healthy choices that support lifelong health and well-being
- ✓ Identify and apply strategies to pursue personal healthy-living goals

Social and community health

- ✓ Propose strategies for developing and maintaining healthy relationships
- ✓ Create strategies for promoting the health and well-being of the school and community

Mental well-being

- ✓ Analyze strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others
- ✓ Assess and evaluate strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others
- ✓ Explore and describe factors that shape personal identities, including social and cultural factors

Physical and Health Education 10

Big ideas

- ✓ Understanding our strengths, weaknesses, and personal preferences helps us plan and achieve our goals
- ✓ Healthy choices influence, and are influenced by, our physical, emotional, and mental well-being
- ✓ Understanding the factors that influence our health empowers us to take action to improve it

Competencies

Healthy and active living

- ✓ Identify and apply strategies to pursue personal healthy-living goals
- ✓ Analyze how health-related decisions support the achievement of personal healthy-living goals

Social and community health

- ✓ Analyze the potential effects of social influences on health

Mental well-being

- ✓ Evaluate and explain strategies for promoting mental well-being
- ✓ Explore factors contributing to substance use
- ✓ Explore and describe factors that shape personal identities, including social and cultural factors
- ✓ Describe the relationships between physical activities, mental well-being and overall health



Career-Life Education

Big idea

- ✓ Finding balance between personal and work life promotes well-being

Competencies

Experience

- ✓ Identify career-life challenges and opportunities, and generate and apply strategies
- ✓ Practise effective strategies for healthy school/work/life balance

Career-Life Connections

Big idea

- ✓ A sense of purpose and career-life balance support well-being

Competencies

Examine

- ✓ Recognize personal worldviews and perspectives, and consider their influence on values, actions, and preferred futures
- ✓ Explore and evaluate personal strategies, including social, physical, and financial, to maintain well-being

Experience

- ✓ Identify and apply preferred approaches to learning for ongoing career-life development and self-advocacy
- ✓ Engage in, reflect on, and evaluate career-life exploration

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