

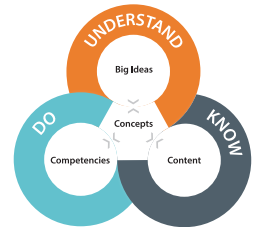
Health guidelines: Are they helpful?

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 Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#)
[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 affect 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

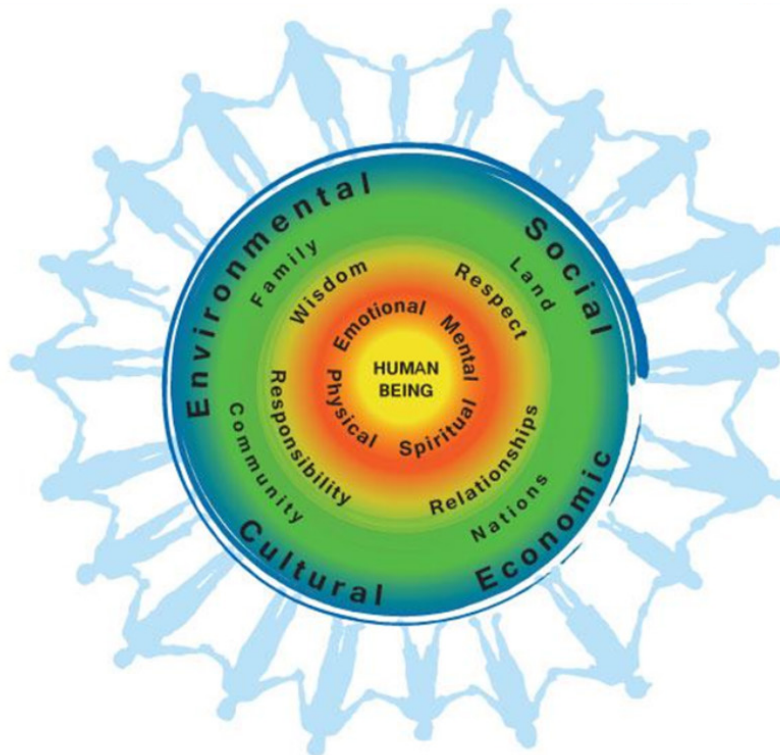
This resource was developed by the **Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research** with funding provided by the **British Columbia Ministry of Health**. Any views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Ministry or the Institute.

World Health Organization says:

- “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”
- “Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health.”

First Nations Perspective of Wellness:

- A visual expression of the First Nations Perspective on Wellness - the way it has always been.
- Passed down from our Elders and traditional healers.
- Wellness belongs to every human being and their reflection of this Perspective will be unique.



CANADIAN 24-HOUR MOVEMENT GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep

PREAMBLE

These guidelines are relevant to apparently healthy children and youth (aged 5–17 years) irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, or the socio-economic status of the family. Children and youth are encouraged to live an active lifestyle with a daily balance of sleep, sedentary behaviours, and physical activities that supports their healthy development.

Children and youth should practice healthy sleep hygiene (habits and practices that are conducive to sleeping well), limit sedentary behaviours (especially screen time), and participate in a range of physical activities in a variety of environments (e.g., home/school/community; indoors/outdoors; land/water; summer/winter) and contexts (e.g., play, recreation, sport, active transportation, hobbies, and chores).

For those not currently meeting these 24-hour movement guidelines, a progressive adjustment toward them is recommended. Following these guidelines is associated with better body composition, cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness, academic achievement and cognition, emotional regulation, pro-social behaviours, cardiovascular and metabolic health, and overall quality of life. The benefits of following these guidelines far exceed potential risks.

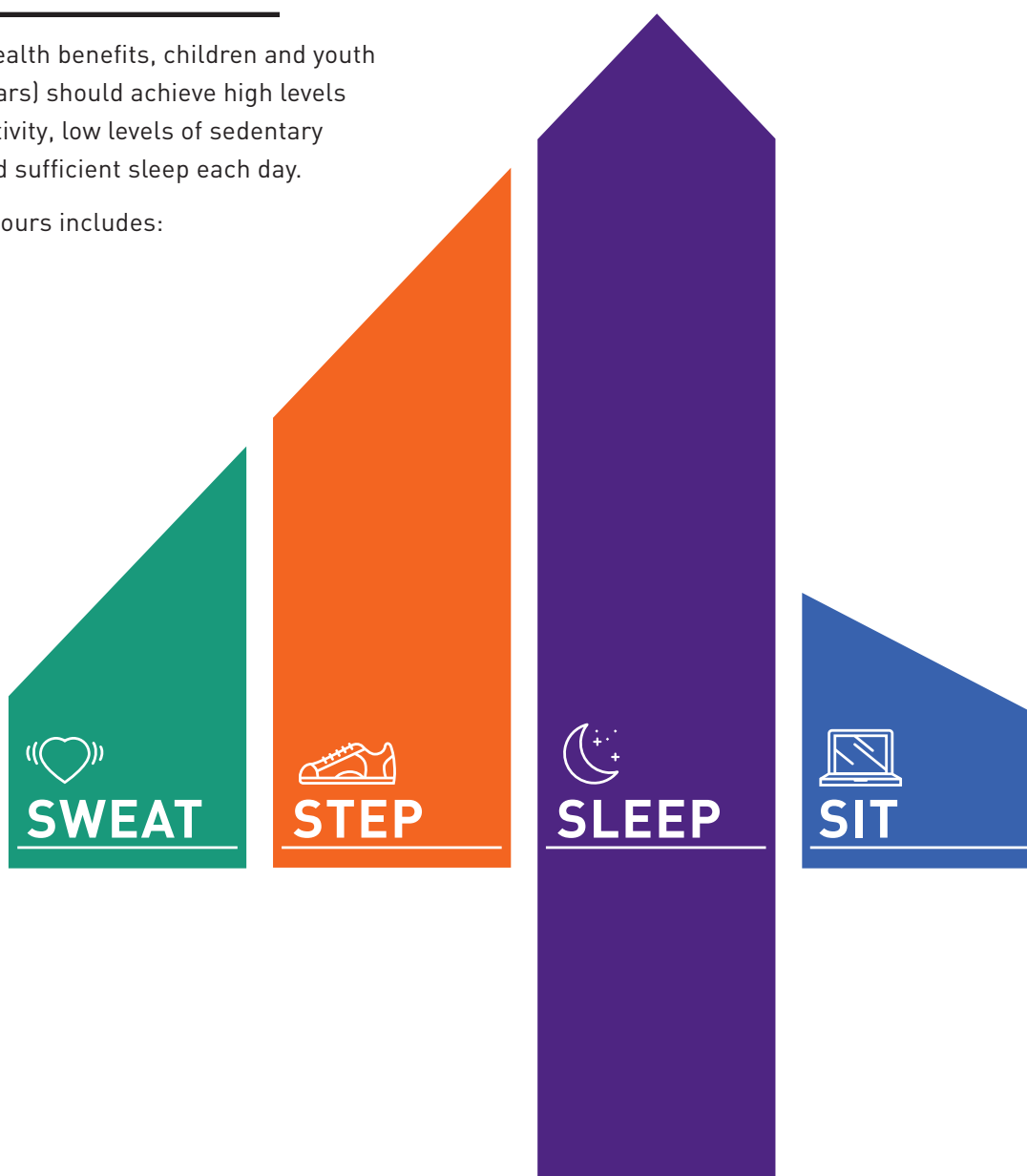
These guidelines may be appropriate for children and youth with a disability or medical condition; however, a health professional should be consulted for additional guidance.

The specific guidelines and more details on the background research informing them, their interpretation, guidance on how to achieve them, and recommendations for research and surveillance are available at www.csep.ca/guidelines.

GUIDELINES

For optimal health benefits, children and youth (aged 5–17 years) should achieve high levels of physical activity, low levels of sedentary behaviour, and sufficient sleep each day.

A healthy 24 hours includes:



SWEAT

MODERATE TO VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

An accumulation of at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity involving a variety of aerobic activities. Vigorous physical activities, and muscle and bone strengthening activities should each be incorporated at least 3 days per week;

STEP

LIGHT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Several hours of a variety of structured and unstructured light physical activities;

SLEEP

SLEEP

Uninterrupted 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night for those aged 5–13 years and 8 to 10 hours per night for those aged 14–17 years, with consistent bed and wake-up times;

SIT

SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

No more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time; Limited sitting for extended periods.

Preserving sufficient sleep, trading indoor time for outdoor time, and replacing sedentary behaviours and light physical activity with additional moderate to vigorous physical activity can provide greater health benefits.



Alcohol and youth

Drinking is a leading cause of death and social issues in young people. Intoxication is associated with:

- High risks of injuries
- Aggression and violence
- Dating violence
- Worsening academic performance

Youth under the legal drinking age should delay drinking for as long as possible.



Pregnant, Trying to Get Pregnant or Breastfeeding

During pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant, there is no known safe amount of alcohol use.

When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest.

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The funding body did not influence guideline content. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

This document is a summary for the public of the new guidance. For more information, please visit www.ccsa.ca.

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Aim to drink less

You can reduce your drinking in steps! Remember, any reduction helps lower your health risks. Every little bit counts.

It's time to pick a new target

What will your weekly drinking target be?



Tips to help you stay on target

- Stick to the limits you've set for yourself.
- Drink slowly.
- Drink lots of water.
- For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.
- Choose alcohol-free or low-alcohol beverages.
- Eat before and while you're drinking.
- Have alcohol-free weeks or do alcohol-free activities.



To better understand and to evaluate your alcohol use, please see *Knowing Your Limits with Alcohol*:

bit.ly/knowing-your-limits



Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health

Guidance to support people in Canada to make informed decisions about alcohol and consider reducing their alcohol use



Canadian Centre
on Substance Use
and Addiction



Evidence. Engagement. Impact.

A standard drink means:



Beer

341 ml (12 oz) of beer
5% alcohol

or



Cooler, cider, ready-to-drink

341 ml (12 oz) of drinks
5% alcohol

or



Wine

142 ml (5 oz) of wine
12% alcohol

or



Spirits

(whisky, vodka, gin, etc.)
43 ml (1.5 oz) of spirits
40% alcohol

To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol, it is recommended that people living in Canada consider reducing their alcohol use.

Alcohol Consumption Per Week

0 drinks per week

Not drinking has benefits, such as better health and better sleep.

No risk

0

1 to 2 standard drinks per week

You will likely avoid alcohol-related consequences for yourself and others.

Low risk

1
2

3 to 6 standard drinks per week

Your risk of developing several different types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer, increases.

Moderate risk

3
4
5
6

7 or more standard drinks per week

Your risk of heart disease or stroke increases.

Each additional standard drink

Radically increases the risk of these alcohol-related consequences.

Increasingly high risk

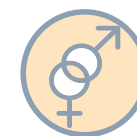
7
8
+ ++



Alcohol Consumption Per Day

If you are going to drink, **don't exceed 2 drinks on any day.**

Drinking less benefits you and others. It reduces your risk of injury and violence, and many health problems that can shorten life.



Sex and Gender

Health risks increase more quickly at 7 or more standard drinks per week for females.

Overall, far more injuries, violence and deaths result from men's drinking.

Cannabis and Health

Using cannabis is a personal choice, but it can have short- and long-term effects on your health. Cannabis can affect your thinking, physical co-ordination and control, and increase your risk of accidents, injuries, reproductive issues and mental health problems, including dependence. Smoking cannabis can increase your chances of having lung problems.

Cannabis Use and Others

Remember that cannabis use can also harm those around you. Be considerate of other people's health and preferences if you choose to use cannabis.

If You Develop Problems

Some people who use cannabis develop problems and may become dependent. Don't hesitate to seek support if you think you need help controlling your cannabis use, if you experience withdrawal symptoms or if your use is affecting your work, school or social and family life. You can find help online, or through a doctor or other health professional.

Endorsements

The LRCUG have been endorsed by the following organizations:



Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health

Acknowledgment

The Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG) are an evidence-based intervention project by the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM), funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

10 WAYS

to Reduce Risks to Your Health When Using Cannabis

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Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG)

Revised 2018

Reference

Fischer, B., Russell, C., Sabioni, P., van den Brink, W., Le Foll, B., Hall, W., Rehm, J. & Room, R. (2017). Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG): An evidence-based update. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(8). DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2017.303818.

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CANADIAN RESEARCH
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DE RECHERCHE
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The following **10 recommendations** suggest ways to use cannabis more safely, based on the best available scientific evidence.

- 1** Remember that every form of cannabis use poses risks to your health. **The only way to completely avoid these risks is by choosing not to use cannabis.** If you decide to use cannabis, follow these recommendations to lower risks to your health.
- 2** The earlier in life you begin using cannabis, the higher your risk of serious health problems. Teenagers, particularly those younger than 16, should delay using cannabis for as long as possible. **You'll lower your risk of cannabis-related health problems if you choose to start using cannabis later in life.**
- 3** Higher-strength or more powerful cannabis products are worse for your health. If you use products with high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, the main mind-altering ingredient in cannabis, you're more likely to develop severe problems, such as dependence or mental health problems. Cannabidiol (CBD), another cannabis ingredient, can counteract some of THC's psychoactive effects. **If you use, choose low-strength products, such as those with a lower THC content or a higher ratio of CBD to THC.**
- 4** **Don't use synthetic cannabis products.** Compared with natural cannabis products, most synthetic cannabis products are stronger and more dangerous. K2 and Spice are examples of synthetic cannabis products. Using these can lead to severe health problems, such as seizures, irregular heartbeat, hallucinations and in rare cases, death.
- 5** **Smoking cannabis (for example, smoking a joint) is the most harmful way of using cannabis because it directly affects your lungs.** There are safer, non-smoking options like vaping or taking edibles that are better for your lungs. Keep in mind that these alternatives aren't risk-free either.
- 6** **If you choose to smoke cannabis, avoid inhaling deeply or holding your breath.** These practices increase the amount of toxins absorbed by your lungs and the rest of your body, and can lead to lung problems.
- 7** The more frequently you use cannabis, the more likely you are to develop health problems, especially if you use on a daily or near-daily basis. Limiting your cannabis use to occasional use at most, such as only using once a week or on weekends, is a good way to reduce your health risks. **Try to limit your use as much as possible.**
- 8** **Cannabis use impairs your ability to drive a car or operate other machinery. Don't engage in these activities after using cannabis, or while you still feel affected by cannabis in any way.** These effects typically last at least six hours, but could be longer, depending on the person and the product used. Using cannabis and alcohol together further increases your impairment. Avoid this combination before driving or operating machinery.
- 9** Some people are more likely to develop problems from cannabis use. **Specifically, people with a personal or family history of psychosis or substance use problems, and pregnant women should not use cannabis at all.**
- 10** **Avoid combining any of the risky behaviours described above.** The more risks you take, the greater the chances of harming your health as a result of cannabis use.

Please note: These recommendations are aimed mainly at non-medical cannabis use.