Canteen Promotion - Background Information

- Water is essential for many functions in the body.
- Water is provided from solid foods, and is produced by the body's metabolism, but the remainder needs to come from drinking water and other fluids.
- A child's fluid needs are best met by drinking water and reduced fat milk.
- A small amount of fruit juice can provide valuable nutrients.
- Excessive consumption of sugar sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, cordial and fruit juices should be discouraged.

How much fluid do children need?

- Children aged 4-8 years need 1.2 litres (about 5 cups) fluid each day.
- At ages 9-13 years, girls need 1.4 litres/day (5-6 cups) and boys need 1.6 litres/day (6 cups)
  * If it is very hot or children are highly active they may need more. This fluid requirement includes water, milk and other drinks

Why Water?

- Water is best to quench thirst
- Water has no sugar or energy (kilojoules).
- Tap water contains fluoride which helps children develop strong teeth.

Why Not Sugar Sweetened Drinks?

- A high consumption of sugar sweetened drinks, including soft drinks, contributes to health problems including; obesity, type 2 diabetes, dental caries and osteoporosis.
- These drinks provide no nutrition other than sugar and fluid. The *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* defines soft drinks as an 'extra' food to be eaten sometimes or in small amounts.
- Children who regularly drink soft drink and other sugar sweetened drinks are more likely to be overweight.
- Soft drinks, sports drinks, and juices, all contain sugar and acid which both contribute to dental decay.
- Fruit juice contains some vitamin C, but ½ cup of most juices (or ½ fresh orange) provides a child's daily requirement for Vitamin C.
- Soft drinks, energy drinks, flavoured mineral waters and sports drinks are banned for sale from school canteens in NSW.
- Artificially sweetened drinks taste sweet, and so teach the habit of sweet drinks. They also contain acid which contributes to dental decay.
- Children whose parents regularly drink soft drinks are more likely to consume soft drinks than those children whose parents do not drink soft drinks regularly.
- Higher soft drink consumption among children and adolescents is especially associated with a decline in milk consumption.

Soft Drink Consumption

The NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS) 2004 reported that:

- About 55% of year 6 boys and almost 37% of year 6 girls drink more than 250ml per day of soft drink
- Among year 6 boys and girls, obese students had the highest consumption of more than 250 ml per day.
- About 20-25% of boys and 20% of girls usually drink soft drink with meals at home

Fruit Juice

Fruit juice provides nutrients such as vitamin C, potassium and folate. Whole fresh fruit is preferred to fruit juice because it has more fibre, and so is more filling and less likely to provide excess kilojoules than if drinking fruit juice. 1/2 a cup of fruit juice has the equivalent kilojoules of a serve of fruit.

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Fruit juice and milk consumption

The SPANS survey also reported that:

– About half of year 6 boys and 30% of year 6 girls consume at least 300 ml of milk a day. About 60% students drink full cream milk. Only small proportions drink reduced fat milk, as recommended. Reduced fat milk has the same nutritional value, but less energy.

– Almost 20% of year 6 boys and 25% year 6 girls reported consuming 100% fruit juice every day, and almost 40% consumed fruit juice at least four times a week.

Milk and Milk Alternatives

Children aged 4-11 years need 2-3 serves of milk or milk alternatives each day.
One serve is

- 1 cup (250ml) milk or soy milk (with added calcium)
- 200g (1 small carton) yoghurt
- 40g (2 slices) cheese

Note: Lactose intolerance may be an issue with some students. Lactose intolerance means they lack the enzyme, lactase, which is needed to digest lactose, a milk sugar. There are, however, many non-dairy milk sources available such as rice, oat, grain and soy milks. It is important that these are fortified with calcium.

Reduced fat milks are encouraged for children over 2 years. Reduced fat milks provide the same important nutrients as full cream milks (such as calcium and protein) but less saturated fat. Reduced fat milk has approximately 2% milk fat compared with regular milk which has on average 3.8% milk fat.
Plain reduced fat milks are preferred. Flavoured reduced fat milks are a healthier choice than sugar sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, cordial etc. Milk and milk alternatives also protect against tooth decay.

Mealtimes

Children that eat meals together as a family, at the table and without the TV on are more likely to have a healthier diet and be a healthier weight.

Public Health Messages to Promote Healthy Drinks

A recent overview of current knowledge of soft drink consumption has provided the following messages:

• Messages for Primary School-aged Children

– Limit soft drink consumption to once a week or less, and in small amounts.
– Water and reduced-fat milk are preferred beverages.
– Limit fruit juice consumption to no more than one cup (250ml) per day.
– Water is the best beverage to quench thirst.
– Serve water with meals.
– Use a refillable water bottle.

• Messages for Parents/Caregivers

– Soft drinks are an ‘extra food’ and should be consumed once a week or less, and in small amounts
– Consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks, artificially sweetened drinks and juices contribute to a ‘sweet palate’.
– The adverse health consequences of excessive soft drink consumption are substantial
– Avoid buying soft drinks and limit availability at home
– Lead by example ie reduce your own consumption
– Serve water with meals
– Offer water and reduced fat milk instead (whole milk is recommended for children under 2 years of age)
– Use a refillable water bottle.

References:

Booth M et al (2006) *NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS) 2004: Full Report*. Sydney: NSW Department of Health.
Rangan A et al (2009). *Soft drinks, weight status and health: Health professionals update*. Sydney: NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition (now known as the Cluster of Public Health Nutrition).
Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand – Executive Summary (2006) Commonwealth of Australia.

An initiative of Central Coast Health Promotion, Clinical Support Cluster – Northern and Nutrition Services, Central Coast Local Health Network