

**From:** [Government of British Columbia](http://www.government.bc.ca)  
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NEWS RELEASE  
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Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Children and Family Development

B.C. youth share ideas around healthy weights

PORT COQUITLAM - Youth from Port Coquitlam's Kwayhquitlam Middle school today shared their ideas around ways we can all combat childhood obesity, and promote healthy weights.

The dialogue was part of the countrywide strategy, "Our Health, Our Future", a collaboration between federal, provincial and territorial governments that is looking at strategies to combat the rising trend of childhood obesity. It is also supported by the Province's health promotion and chronic disease prevention strategy, Healthy Families BC.

The focus of the dialogue was on actions that could be taken to address the current childhood obesity epidemic in Canada, including actions that youth individually and collectively feel could be taken, what can be done at home and what can be done at school.

In September 2010, Canada's Ministers of Health and Healthy Living released "Curbing Childhood Obesity: An FPT Framework for Action to Promote Healthy Weights" and agreed to engage in a national dialogue with citizens, industry and non-government organizations to develop a shared approach to turning the tide on childhood overweight and obesity.

B.C.'s provincial health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, is the co-lead in the development of recommendations for action, along with his federal Health Canada counterpart, Dr. Paul Gully.

The outcomes will contribute to a report and recommendations on collective actions for healthy weights for the meeting of federal, provincial and territorial Health Ministers in November 2011.

Healthy Families BC is implementing a variety of healthy living programs throughout the province to help improve British Columbians' health, reduce obesity and promote wellness. Chronic disease is the largest single burden on the health of British Columbians and the health-care system, while obesity is the second-highest preventable cause of death

in British Columbia.

As part of "Our Health, Our Future", all British Columbians - young or old - are encouraged to contribute to the conversation online at: [www.ourhealthourfuture.gc.ca](http://www.ourhealthourfuture.gc.ca)

Quotes:

Minister of Health Michael de Jong -

"Through Healthy Families BC, we are working to curb the obesity and chronic disease epidemic. B.C. may have the healthiest population in Canada, but we still have work to do."

"I'd like to thank the youth who participated in this dialogue for adding their voices and working with us to find solutions. Together, we can create a brighter future for our children and grandchildren."

Minister of Children and Family Development Mary McNeil -

"We all have a role to play in preventing the spread of chronic diseases, and our children have many positive ideas and suggestions for reducing the trend of childhood obesity."

"By engaging with youth, we are taking positive steps to change the tide, and ensure that this generation is not the first one to have a shorter lifespan than their parents."

B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer Dr. Perry Kendall -

"Being overweight or obese, not being physically active or eating a balanced diet and smoking are all contributing dramatically to the rise in chronic diseases in B.C. and across Canada. We need to arm our young people with the knowledge and tools to help them live more healthful, happy lives."

Quick Facts:

- \* Evidence shows that if British Columbians exercised for 30 minutes a day, controlled their weight, ate reasonably well and refrained from smoking - they could reduce their risk factors for most chronic disease by up to 80 per cent.

- \* Obese Canadians are four times more likely to have diabetes, 3.3 times more likely to have high blood pressure and 56 per cent more likely to have heart disease than those with healthy weights.

- \* Obese individuals are 50 to 100 per cent more likely to die prematurely from all causes than those with healthy weights.

- \* British Columbia has the lowest adult overweight and obesity rates in Canada at about 45 per cent.

- \* Childhood overweight and obesity rates are rising in Canada. Obesity

rates in children have almost tripled in the last 25 years.

\* In British Columbia, 51,000 children (seven per cent) aged two to 17 years were classified as obese and 138,500 (20 per cent) as overweight.

\* Childhood overweight and obesity in British Columbia is an issue nearing crisis proportions according to the Province's Select Standing Committee on Health.

\* According to the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overweight school-aged children are 50 per cent more likely to become obese adults, with overweight adolescents 70 to 80 per cent more likely to become overweight adults.

\* As obese adults, today's overweight children will display much higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, renal failure, amputations, blindness, cancer and mental-health problems.

\* British Columbians consume about 3,300 mg of sodium per day, more than

twice the recommended intake for adults. Excess sodium is linked to 30 per cent of all cases of hypertension, a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Almost 40 per cent of Canadian adults have high blood

pressure or are pre-hypertensive.

\* Reducing average sodium intake to 1,500 mg/day would prevent over 23,500 cardiovascular events per year in Canada and generate direct health-care savings of \$1.38 billion per year and indirect savings of \$2.99 billion per year.

\* In September 2010, federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health and healthy living (except Quebec) adopted the Sodium Working Group's interim goal of reducing the sodium intake of Canadians to a population average of 2,300 mg/day for persons aged nine to 50 years by 2016 (less for those younger and older).

Learn More:

Learn more about what B.C. is doing at Healthy Families BC:

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

Join the dialogue at Our Health, Our Future:

[www.ourhealthourfuture.gc.ca](http://www.ourhealthourfuture.gc.ca)

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