

Hydration Guidelines

Overview

In December 2010, Congress enacted the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. Section 203 of this law requires all schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) make plain drinking water available to all students at no charge.¹ Free potable water must be available during meal time in the same location the meal is served.¹

Additional recommendations relating to students' access to free potable drinking water during the school day are available from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH). Recommendations include increased access to drinking water in schools with multiple access points throughout the school setting, allowing students to have water bottles in class or be allowed to obtain water from fountain as needed and the promotion of water consumption as a healthy beverage.^{2,3}

Overweight and obesity among children is a national epidemic. Research has shown the consumption of water in place of juice and sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) will reduce calorie intake and assist in combating obesity by up to 31%.³ By providing access to safe, free drinking water, the students have a viable beverage option before, during and after school.^{2,3} Encouraging the consumption of water in place of SSBs during the day promotes children's overall health and plays a crucial role in the fight against childhood obesity. Water as primary hydration assists in maintaining hydration, reduces energy intake and reduces the incidence of dental caries.^{2,3}

Children spend at least 6 hours per day at school and need an ongoing water supply to keep their bodies functioning normally and to avoid dehydration. In addition, drinking water has been shown to improve students' readiness to learn.³ Research indicates the consumption of adequate water throughout the day may improve cognitive function and mood.³ Even mild dehydration has been shown to alter cognitive function with decreases in alertness, concentration and short-term memory.³ Moderate to severe levels of dehydration show an increased impairment in performance and risk of heat illness or death.³

Guidelines

- Promote the consumption of water as an essential nutrient that plays a role in overall health.
- Provide all students and employees with access to clean, safe, palatable drinking water free of charge at every District facility in the cafeteria and eating areas, classrooms, hallways, gymnasiums, play yards, athletic fields and faculty lounges throughout the school day and at before- and after-school activities.
- Promote drinking water as a substitute for sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), such as fruit juice drinks with added sugar, soda, sports drinks and flavored milks by eliminating the sale and advertising of competitive food and beverages that do not meet nutrition standards set forth by the USDA and ANS.
- Allow students to bring plain unflavored drinking water from home and to take water into classroom and carry with them throughout the day, provided that the water is in an approved container.
- Perform maintenance on all water fountains regularly.
- Set and maintain hygiene standards for drinking fountains, water jugs, hydration stations, water jets and other methods for delivering drinking water.
- Supply drinking water to students if the main water source is shut off. Where appropriate and necessary, provide water coolers or other portable water dispensers with cups until permanent measures are taken.
- Encourage school principals, booster clubs, student body organizations and parent groups to raise money in ways that do not take advantage of thirsty students, do not promote a particular brand and do not encourage consumption of high-calorie, low-nutrient products.

1. US Dept of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Service. Public Law 111-296-Dec.12, 2010.
2. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and health Promotion. Increasing access to drinking water in schools. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/pdf/water_access_in_schools_508.pdf. Accessed January 10, 2017.
3. Popkin, BM, D'Anci, KE, Rosenberg, IR. Water, hydration and health. *Nutr Rev.* 2010 August; 68(8):439-458.