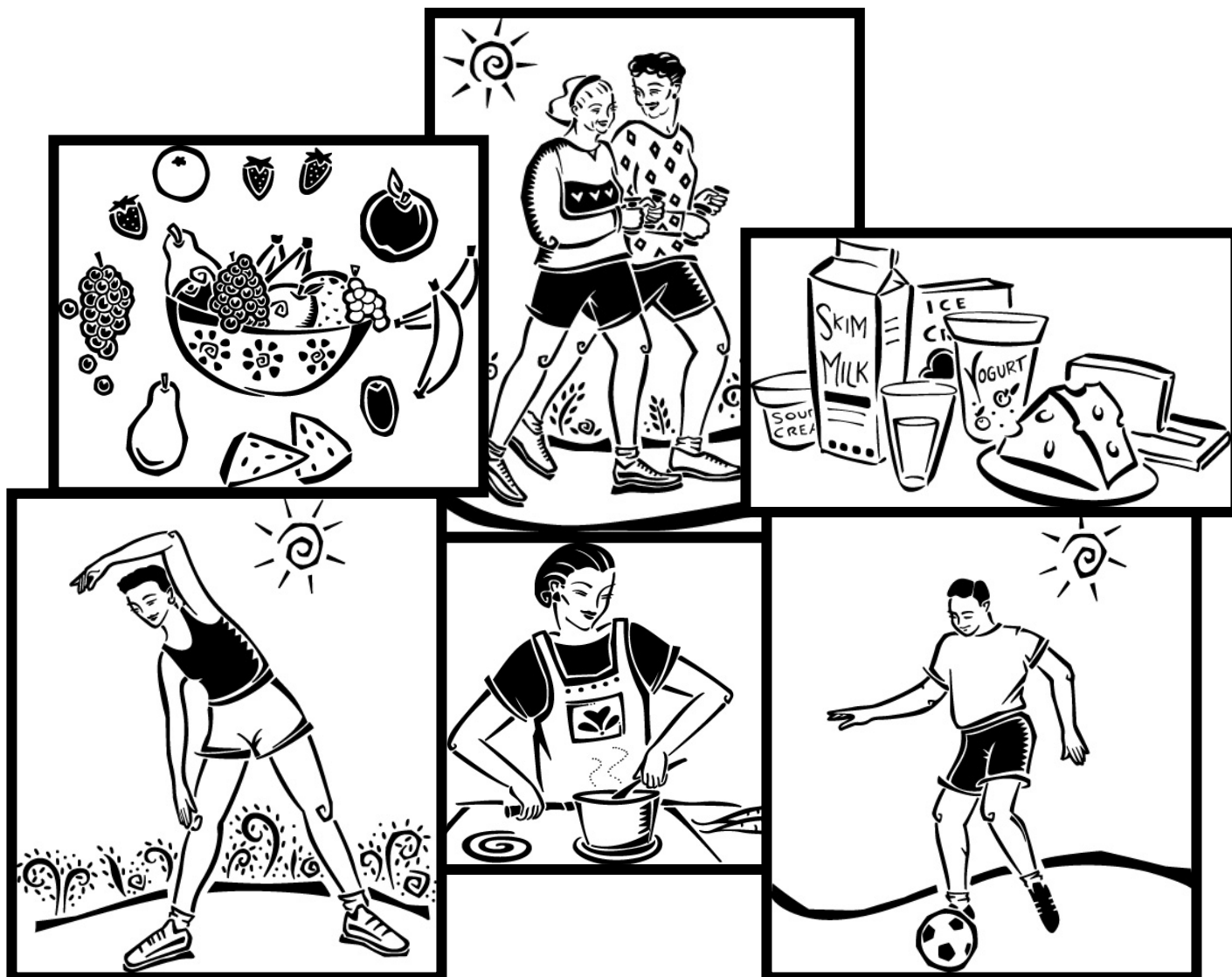


# ANALYSIS OF ONTARIO HEALTH UNIT DATA FROM THE HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING (HEAL) AWARENESS RRFSS<sup>i</sup> MODULE



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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<sup>i</sup> Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System

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### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2006, the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) released Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL)<sup>(1)</sup>. The Public Health Research, Evaluation and Development (PHRED) Program was commissioned by MHP to develop logic models and an evaluation plan to assess the Action Plan's impact. The evaluation plan advocated for systematic and ongoing data tracking as a critical prerequisite in determining whether the Action Plan was meeting its objectives. Therefore, members of the PHRED Program participated on a provincial module development work-group, led by the Middlesex-London Health Unit, to develop a module for the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) that would collect data on Ontarians' awareness of the benefits of physical activity, healthy eating and energy balance. It was proposed that the module be used to collect baseline data prior to the launch of the Action Plan and again a few years after the Action Plan's implementation to measure short-term and intermediate term outcomes around awareness and knowledge of the HEAL key messages.

Since the module's development, the Plan has received less profile by MHP than originally anticipated. Therefore, this report has been tailored to offer the greatest value to public health practitioners and to support the seven participating health units (i.e., Brant County Health Unit; City of Hamilton Public Health Services; Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit; Middlesex-London Health Unit; Niagara Region Public Health Department; Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit; and Sudbury & District Health Unit) in determining the focus of future public health programs related to physical activity and health eating. In addition to the overall report, each participating health unit will receive tables and a figure summarizing their health unit's results.

## Key Results

- Almost all participants were aware of the:
  - health benefits of daily physical activity (99.7%)
  - health benefits of daily fruit and vegetable consumption (99.8%)
  - reduced risk of certain diseases by having a healthy body weight (98.7%)
- 74% of participants knew that to maintain a healthy body weight they should eat healthy and be active everyday.
- Only 23.7% of respondents could accurately identify the amount of daily physical activity (PA) recommended by Canada's Physical Activity Guide<sup>(2)</sup>.
- Almost 60% of respondents felt they were getting enough daily PA to maintain health.
- Slightly more than half (53.6%) of respondents reported that they intended to increase their daily PA over the next year.
- Only 23.6% of respondents could accurately identify the minimum number of daily fruit and vegetable (F&V) servings recommended in *either* the previous or current Canada's Food Guide<sup>(3)</sup>.
- Significantly more respondents were knowledgeable of the minimum daily F&V servings recommended in Canada's previous Food Guide compared to the current Food Guide.
- Almost 70% of respondents felt they were eating enough F&V daily to maintain health.
- 36% of respondents planned to increase their daily F&V consumption over the next year.

## Implications & Recommendations

- Public health campaigns with a *single* focus on raising awareness of healthy eating and physical activity messages are not needed.
- Multi-component strategies, which may include education and skill building, environmental supports, community mobilization, advocacy, and policy development <sup>(4-6)</sup>, should be implemented to support Ontarians in identifying the need for, and making, healthy lifestyle changes.
- Efforts to improve Ontarians' actual PA behaviours and F&V intake should continue to be prioritized.
- In order to monitor PA behaviours and F&V consumption, efforts should be made to include the *IPAQ* (Short Form International **Physical Activity Questionnaire**) – *Physical Activity* and *Fruits & Vegetables* modules as core RRFSS modules.
- Options should also be explored to establish a population-based *provincial* surveillance system with adequate infrastructure to facilitate ongoing and systematic monitoring of key population health indicators, such as PA behaviours and F&V intake, across the entire province.

## Limitations

- The data collected is not a representative sample of Ontario residents. The sample includes only English speaking residents, aged 18-69, from seven health units across the province.
- The HEAL Awareness RRFSS module asks “what is the minimum number of daily servings of fruit & vegetables that Canada’s Food Guide recommends?”. As a result, participants who identified a number that was above the *minimum* number of daily servings were classified as “incorrect response”. These participants may in fact have had some knowledge of the recommended number of daily F&V servings for their age and sex, therefore it is important that the “% knowledgeable of *minimum* number of recommended F&V servings” not be misinterpreted to mean “% that are knowledgeable of the Food Guide’s recommendation for daily F&V servings.”

## References

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