

Backgrounder for “The Journey From Dieting to Healthy Eating” — A Resource for Youth

What is the purpose of this resource?

“[The Journey from Dieting to Healthy Eating](#)” infographic was designed to promote the concept that healthy bodies come in different sizes and shapes. Diet culture is everywhere as we are constantly bombarded with messages that our bodies aren’t good enough. You can use the infographic and this backgrounder to support youth to reconsider dieting and explore shifting to a more positive relationship with food and their body.

Why focus on health, not weight?

One of the most common myths is that “you can lose weight if you try hard enough” (with the “right” diet). [The bottom line is fad diets don’t work.](#) Weight lost is often regained in the future, plus more. It’s mostly genetics that determines your body shape, weight, and how you will grow. Physical activity and diet will influence your body weight and shape, but there is a limit to how much you can change it. What matters is that we care for our bodies through eating well and being active—behaviours which benefit everyBODY. Instead of trying to change weight, practice self-compassion. Instead of a weight loss goal, consider behavioural goals related to eating habits, sleep, relationships, or physical activity.

How does healthy eating differ from dieting?*

Healthy Eating	Dieting
Adequate, meets nutritional needs	Restrictive, restrained eating
Balanced, inclusive, variety	Omits certain foods or food groupings
Improved quality	Limited quantity
Freedom and flexibility	Rigid rules
“All foods can fit” into a healthy eating pattern	“Good food, bad food”
Enjoyable, positive mood	Unsatisfying, negative mood
Based on internal cues of hunger and satisfaction	Based on external controls (e.g. calorie counting)
Long term	Short term

*Note: These are general guidelines and some may not fit due to individual needs and preferences. It is important to respect and honour everyone’s medical and personal reasons for their food choices.

Resources to Build a Positive Relationship with Food and Body

It can be hard to find reliable health information because the approach or language often supports diet culture. Invite youth to [spot nutrition fads and find good sources for nutrition advice](#).

Watch Videos

- [Poodle Science \(3-min\)](#) about the limitations of research on health and weight from ASDAH
- [50 People, One Question \(4-min\)](#) asking 50 people what they would change about themselves
- [All Bodies on Bikes \(13-min\)](#) changing the idea about what people in larger bodies can do

Listen, Read & Share

- [Let Us Eat Cake \(podcast\)](#) supporting a shift away from diet culture and weight bias
- [Body Kindness \(podcast\)](#) supporting adults and parents find a healthy relationship with food
- [Food psych \(podcast\)](#) exploring how to make peace with food and break free from diet culture
- [Nalgona Positivity Pride \(website\)](#) supporting queer body positivity for people of colour
- [Jessie's Legacy \(website\)](#) providing eating disorder prevention resources and blog
- [Foundry BC \(website\)](#) providing body image and healthy eating tips for youth

Apply

- [The Joy of Eating \(1 page article\)](#) about building a healthy eating foundation for children & adults
- [Intuitive Eating \(Books, audiobook, workbook\)](#) about intuitive eating for adults and youth
- [The Mindful Eating Workbook \(workbook\)](#) about developing a mindful eating practice
- [Be Nourished Body Trust® \(workbook, e-course\)](#) about occupying and caring for your body
- [Your Body is not an Apology \(workbook\)](#) about interrupting body shame & oppression

Additional Information

For more resources and tools to support school-aged children and youth in connection with food and body image, refer to [VCH Supporting Healthy Eating at School](#).

If you have specific questions about nutrition, you can contact HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 to speak to a registered dietitian or [email a HealthLinkBC dietitian](#). If you're concerned about an eating disorder or mental health in general, consider [Kelty Mental Health](#).