

Increased access to water and water fountains

Description

Water is an essential nutrient for healthy bodily function. The human body requires the drinking of water because their body does not have the ability to produce sufficient levels of its own. Physiological responses and performance may be affected through as little as 2% loss of body weight through dehydration. In addition, evidence from a range of sources identify low water intake with a number of disease states such as urinary tract and colon cancers, kidney stones and prolapse. Water intake is also essential for the production of saliva which stimulates good conditions for oral health (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2006).

The Victorian Government's *Better Health Channel* states:

'Water is needed to:

- maintain the health and integrity of every cell in the body;
- keep the bloodstream liquid enough to flow through blood vessels;
- help eliminate by products of the body's metabolism, excess electrolytes, for example sodium and potassium, and urea which is a waste product formed through the processing of dietary protein;
- regulate body temperature through sweating;
- keep mucous membranes moist, such as those of the lungs and mouth;
- lubricate and cushion joints;
- reduce the risk of cystitis by keeping the bladder clear of bacteria;
- aid digestion and prevent constipation;
- work as a moisturiser to improve the skin's texture and appearance;
- carry nutrients and oxygen to cells, and;
- serve as a shock absorber inside the eyes, spinal cord and in the amniotic sac surrounding the foetus in pregnancy' (Deakin University, 2007)

If you are a health promoter, then this is an advocacy intervention. You need to take steps to convince your local council and the local water authority of the benefits of the provision of water fountains and bottle refill stations in public areas. Pretorius suggests options for Local Government to consider in planning for environments to increase access to water and water fountains (Pretorius, 2008). Settings such as schools, workplaces and other education settings are also places where people spend large amounts of time, and should also be considered as places where water fountains and water bottle refill stations should be provided.

The following advocacy framework may assist:

- Step 1 Select an issue or problem you want to address
- Step 2 Analyse and gather information on the issue/problem
- Step 3 Develop aims and objectives for your advocacy work
- Step 4 Identify your targets
- Step 5 Identify your allies
- Step 6 Identify your resources
- Step 7 Create an action plan
- Step 8 Implement, monitor and evaluate

Further information on advocacy is available at

http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/advocacy/advocacy_article.jsp?articleId=2384

Size and distribution of the problem

General data about healthy eating (including available data for Gippsland) can be found at

<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Healthy-eating--Size-and-distribution-of-the-problem>

Table 1: Usual source of drinking water by area (two to <13 years), Victoria 2006

Tap water	Estimate (%)	95% CI
Metro	74.8	72.7 - 76.9
Rural	53.0	50.6 - 55.4

Source: 2006 Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey Technical Report, 2006 (Department of Human Services, 2007).

Table 2: Proportion of children who drink more water than soft drinks (two to <13 years), Victoria 2006

	Estimate (%)	95% CI
All (two to <13 years)	76.7	75.1 - 78.2
Two to < five years	77.2	74.3 - 80.0
Five to < nine years	77.2	74.6 - 79.9
Nine to <13 years	75.8	73.2 - 78.3

Source: 2006 Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey Technical Report, 2006 (Department of Human Services, 2007).

Leadership

- Early childhood services
- Primary, secondary and tertiary education facilities
- Workplaces
- Sport and recreation facilities
- Public land managers

Suggested Partners

- Water Authorities

Resources for Implementation

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) and the Department of Health have developed *The Improving oral health – Local government action guide* to help local governments improve oral health and prevent oral disease in the community. This guide outlines a range of evidence-informed actions that councils can consider when preparing their *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans*, *Municipal Early Years Plans* and other strategies. “*Improve access to drinking water in public places through the installation of drinking water fountains*” is one of the actions to create a healthy environment.

[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/5454804549D29E81CA257B1C00829B66/\\$FILE/Improving%20oral%20health-local%20government%20action%20guide_7May2013.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/5454804549D29E81CA257B1C00829B66/$FILE/Improving%20oral%20health-local%20government%20action%20guide_7May2013.pdf)

Do Something! a non-profit organisation is working in partnership with Australian councils to reduce use of bottled water for their offices, facilities and events and upgrade & improve their water fountains, to increase access to safe drinking water and reduce environmental problems caused by bottled water. <http://www.gotap.com.au/>

The National Health and Medical Research Council provide a recommended water intake for life stages and gender http://www.nrv.gov.au/resources/_files/n35-water.pdf

The [Achievement Program](#) is a Healthy Together Victoria Initiative which replaces the ‘Go for your life’ program. This initiative will recognise achievements in promoting health and wellbeing and support the development of safe, healthy and friendly environments for learning, working and living in:

- schools and early childhood education and care services
- workplaces and workforces, and
- local communities.

Participating organisations will receive guidelines, resources and support to help meet [statewide benchmarks](#) for health promotion. They will be linked with local health professionals, organisations and programs to access additional support.

The benchmarks within the Achievement Program that are aligned with this intervention are contained within the “Healthy Eating and Oral Health” health priority area.

For Early childhood education and care services the relevant benchmarks are 1 & 7.

For Primary schools the relevant benchmarks are 1, 6 & 10.

Workplaces – Water is freely available at workplaces.

The Healthy eating and oral health benchmarks can be downloaded from the following links

[Early childhood education and care services](#)

[Primary schools](#)

[Workplaces](#)

Smiles 4 Miles is an initiative of Dental Health Services Victoria working in partnership with local agencies to improve the oral health of the youngest children in our community. With the aim being to promote life long oral and general health, the early childhood community including children, parents and teachers, are actively engaged through training, curriculum activities, role modelling and parent information sessions which encourage healthy eating and drinking practices. Adopting the three key messages Eat well, Drink well and Clean well, early childhood settings can create environments that support the development of life long healthy habits in children and their families. <http://www.dhsv.org.au/smiles4miles/>

Dental Health Services Victoria has developed a comprehensive resource base designed to encourage healthy oral habits for the whole population. Resources focussed on:

- children
- adolescents
- parents and carers
- people with disabilities and carers of people with a disability
- adults
- older people
- Maternal and child health nurses, primary school nurses, teachers and children’s services staff

are available at <http://www.dhsv.org.au/oral-health-resources/fact-sheets-and-tip-cards/>

Options for Local Government to consider in planning for physical activity and healthy eating environments can be found at http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/hpu/lga_physical_eating.pdf

WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention: Romp & Chomp: Assists with promoting healthy eating, active play and drinks messages for early childhood staff with supportive policies in early childhood services, training for staff, education resources and social marketing messages. Journal article on the results of Romp and Chomp can be accessed at <http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/91/4/831>

Water is Cool in School Campaign, UK <http://www.wateriscoolinschool.org.uk/>

Wise Up On Water, UK. <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/resources/wise-up---children-web.pdf>

Water and Healthy Ageing: Hydration Best Practice Toolkit for Care Homes

<http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/older-people/care-homes-toolkit/6-practical-tip.pdf>

Evaluation Tools

A pilot study in the Cambridgeshire UK introduced the completion by older people in two residential settings of a daily diary of water consumption over seven weeks (Anglian Water, Undated).

http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/_assets/media/health-on-tap-good-hydration-report.pdf

A. Kaushik, M. A. Mullee, T. N. Bryant & C. M. Hill (2007) A study of the association between children’s access to drinking water in primary schools and their fluid intake: can water be ‘cool’ in school? *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 33, 409-415. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/118486669/PDFSTART>

Methods for measuring levels of consumption of fruit and vegetables and healthy eating are described at <http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Healthy-Eating-Evaluation-Tools>

References

Deakin University (2007) Water: a vital nutrient. *Victorian Government*. Accessed on 18 February 2009.
http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Water_a_vital_nutrient?OpenDocument

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<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ocecd/statewide-outcomes/library/publications/2006-child-health-and-wellbeing-survey-technical-report.html>

Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (2008) Water is Cool in School Campaign.
<http://www.wateriscoolinschool.org.uk/>

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National Health and Medical Research Council (2006) Nutrient Reference Values. Commonwealth of Australia. Accessed on. http://www.nrv.gov.au/resources/_files/n35-water.pdf

Pretorius, J. (2008) Supportive Environments for Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Project, Phase One: Options Paper. Heart Foundation and Queensland Government. Accessed on 27 April 2010.
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