



A Healthy Beverage Initiative at UBC

BACKGROUND

As one of the first universities in the world to adopt the *Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Colleges and Universities*, UBC has made a significant commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of our community members. As we work toward becoming a wellbeing-promoting institution, UBC has a responsibility and an opportunity to adopt practices that improve the health of the people who live, work, learn, and play on our campuses.

Informed by the Okanagan Charter, the *UBC Action Framework for a Nutritionally Sound Campus* was developed by the UBC Food and Nutrition Working Group, which comprises faculty, staff, and student stakeholders from both campuses. It set out the following vision:

A nutritionally sound campus increases intake of safe, healthy, and sustainable food, supports development of nutrition skills and knowledge, and promotes health and wellbeing for all members of the UBC community.

One of the goals associated with this vision is to increase drinking water consumption at UBC. This goal can be furthered through the adoption of a Healthy Beverage Initiative on our campuses, as well as working with campus partners to increase tap water provisions.

A HEALTHY BEVERAGE INITIATIVE AT UBC

A Healthy Beverage Initiative is an ambitious way of exemplifying our commitment to wellbeing at UBC and engage our community in a discussion about our collective health and wellbeing. Our students, staff, and faculty work and learn in a demanding, high-performance academic environment; having access to healthy food and beverage products on campus, plus the information necessary to make healthy dietary choices, will help our community members thrive.

Knowing this, and considering the alarming health and economic burden caused by sugar-sweetened beverage consumption¹, UBC Wellbeing and the Food and Nutrition Working Group are working with students, staff, and faculty to explore how to best promote water consumption and reduce sugar-sweetened beverage consumption at UBC. Sugar-sweetened beverages are defined as pre-packaged beverages that include any form of sugar added during the manufacturing process. These beverages include soft drinks, energy drinks, lemonade, sweetened iced teas, sports drinks, sweetened fortified water, and fruit drinks with less than 100% fruit juice (see Appendix 1 for more information on beverage classification). Sugar-sweetened beverages are the single-largest contributor of added sugar in the diet².

Phasing out the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages as part of an overall healthy food environment strategy is a sensible and impactful initiative that has proven effective on campuses and in institutions worldwide. All major food-provider stakeholders at UBC — Student Housing and Hospitality Services, Athletics & Recreation, UBC Okanagan Food Services, and AMS — have informed and championed this initiative from the beginning.

Implementing a healthy beverage initiative at UBC is a complex undertaking; it must be supported across our campuses and align with UBC's approach to embedding and operationalizing wellbeing. We are considering fiscal implications as well as impacts on operations. However, our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our community remains a priority.



WORK THUS FAR

UBC Wellbeing has led engagement sessions and surveyed staff, faculty, and students on both campuses with the aim of collecting diverse perspectives on how best to engage our community in a healthy beverage initiative. In spring 2018, the UBC Executive and the UBC Wellbeing Steering Committee approved the following key actions to implement a staged yet ambitious healthy beverage initiative, which also supports UBC's draft Water Action Plan.

Action 1: Encourage drinking water consumption.

Explore and implement opportunities to adapt our environment to increase safe drinking water consumption in alignment with the draft UBC Water Action Plan.

Sample initiatives underway:

- Campus & Community Planning is installing new signage and adding water fixtures to encourage tap water consumption.
- UBC Food Services is ensuring tap water is freely available at all locations (bring your own bottle) and encouraging the consumption of healthier beverages in general, while also ensuring the price of bottled water it is not more expensive than soft drinks
- UBC-O and V have water stations available in buildings across campus

Action 2: Promote healthier beverage choices with our community.

Create a campaign to encourage our community members to make healthier, more nutritious beverage choices, and promote drinking water. This will include developing principles for the marketing and promotion of beverages on our campuses.

Sample initiatives underway:

- AMS will support continuous promotion of tap water on campus
- UBC Food Services marketing and communications team will be working with Coca-Cola to ensure all beverage marketing and promotions, including cooler and equipment wrapping, is focused on non-tier 6 (red) beverages. They will also launch a campaign to promote healthy beverage choices
- As part of a new Cold Beverage Contract tendering process, Student Housing & Hospitality Services and UBC Athletics required submissions to demonstrate how they would support the HBI in 2 out of 3 options

Action 3: Modify our environment to support healthier beverage consumption.

Food service providers commit to making meaningful changes to the beverage environment to encourage healthier beverage choices.

Sample initiatives underway:

- Student Housing & Hospitality Services will completely remove red sugary drinks (Tier 6) from selected student dining halls on each campus, and one retail location at UBC-V. The resulting sales and perception shifts among first year students in residence will be evaluated by a faculty-led evaluation project
- AMS, Student Housing & Hospitality Services, UBC Athletics, and UBC Okanagan will increase the percentage of healthier beverage choices in food outlets and focus advertisement on green beverages.
- AMS will focus prominent placement on green beverages and gradually reduce the availability of sugary drinks and replace them with various unsweetened drinks

This multipronged approach is supported by evidence suggesting that to change behaviours related to food consumption, policy and environmental nudges are more effective than educating our community alone³.



HAVE AN IDEA OR WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

We encourage all students, staff, and faculty members to get involved in this initiative. Want to host an event with only green beverages? Do a class project to deepen our understanding of beverage consumption? Encourage your sports team to use sports drinks appropriately? Want to create a healthy beverage initiative at another campus?

Get in touch, we'd love to hear from you and share resources.

For general information about the Healthy Beverage Initiative at UBC, please contact one of the co-leads of the Wellbeing Food and Nutrition Working Group: Melissa Baker (melissa.baker@ubc.ca) or Matt Dolf (matt.dolf@ubc.ca).

REFERENCES

1. Jones AC, Verrman JL, Hammond D (2017) The Health and Economic Impact of tax on sugary drinks in Canada, p 2.
2. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2017) Get the Facts: Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Consumption. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/dat-statistics/sugar-sweetened-beverages-intake.html> [accessed 15 Aug 2018]
3. Lu, A.H., Dickin, K. & Dollahite, J. (2014) Development and Application of a Framework to Assess Community Nutritionists' Use of Environmental Strategies to Prevent Obesity. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviour*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 475-483. Available from: [http://www.ineb.org/article/S1499-4046\(14\)00575-2/pdf](http://www.ineb.org/article/S1499-4046(14)00575-2/pdf) [Accessed 2 May 2017].



APPENDIX I: BEVERAGE CLASSIFICATION

Beverages can be further grouped following a traffic light system. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of all the beverages that can fit in each category.

- Blue: choose most often
- Green: choose often
- Yellow: choose sometimes
- Red: choose rarely

Water*

Tea & Coffee (Hot & Cold)	Plain Milk & Alternatives
– Tea** (unsweetened)	– Plain milk
– Coffee** (unsweetened)	– Unsweetened plant-based milk alternatives

Lightly Sweetened Beverages	Non-Calorically Sweetened Beverages***	Sugary with Naturally Occurring Nutrients
– 8 g of sugar or less per portion size sold	– Zero calorie soda	– 100% fruit/vegetable juice
	– Non-calorically sweetened fortified water	– Chocolate milk
	– Diet iced tea	

Sugar Sweetened (SSBs) Without Naturally Occurring Nutrients

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|---|----------------------|
| – Soft drinks | – Lemonade drinks |
| – Fruit drinks (less than 100% fruit juice) | – Sweetened iced tea |
| – Energy drinks | – Sports drinks**** |
| – Calorically sweetened fortified water | |

*Bottled water is only recommended if potable tap water is not available

**Made to order drinks can have added sugar

***Based on evidence of potential harm regardless of sugar content, the sale of diet energy drinks is not encouraged

****Sports drinks may be beneficial for athletes in certain situations

Notes: Beverage classification adapted from Popkin et al. (2006). The classification of beverages is a complex task and can be based on many factors such as sugar content, nutritional value, calories, environmental impact, etc. For the purposes of this initiative we are choosing to focus on reducing sugar sweetened beverages without naturally occurring nutrients specifically as these beverages have the most negative impact on health.

Alcoholic beverages are excluded from this initiative and beverage classification.