

Girls Action on GIRLS AND HEALTHY LIVING

Every day, girls face challenges making healthy choices and living a healthy life.

GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION believes that providing information, tools and safer spaces for girls will improve their physical and mental health.



Healthy Living is About Choice and Living in Healthy Ways

Living a life of physical activity and balanced eating, living free of violence, living tobacco free, and having the physical, mental, and spiritual capacity to make healthy choices.

BUT IT'S ALSO ABOUT THINGS LIKE

Equal access to recreational activities



Safe neighborhoods



Accessible and supportive health services



Gender equality and opportunities to make healthy choices



DID YOU KNOW ?



85% of Canadian girls aged 15-24 drink more than is recommended in Canadian guidelines to stay at low risk of health problems.¹

GIRLS 10-15 YEARS old who are highly concerned about their weight are nearly twice as likely to get drunk as those who are less concerned about their weight.²

BI-SEXUAL GIRLS are twice as likely to "binge" drink as heterosexual youth the same age.³



Girls are starting to smoke at a younger age than boys⁴ and now **MORE** young women, aged 18-19, smoke than young boys.⁵

Young women with low self-esteem and weight concerns are more likely to take up smoking.^{6,7,8}

GIRLS BECOME LESS ACTIVE AS THEY GROW



6/10 girls ages 5-12 are NOT active enough.

FOR TEEN GIRLS, IT'S 7/10.⁹



Girls from **ethnocultural communities** are the most underrepresented in the Canadian sport and recreation systems.¹⁰

The odds of weekly sports participation are almost **80% higher** for Aboriginal boys than girls.¹¹

GIRLS DON'T NEED TO BE "FIXED" OR TO BE GIVEN BAND-AID SOLUTIONS.

Girls DO need knowledge and opportunities so they can step in a healthy direction.

GIRLS' PROGRAMS, like girl-only groups, activities and workshops PROMOTE HEALTH.

HOW ?

girls' programs

Promote self-esteem and positive body image.

Create safer spaces to discuss issues that are often avoided or seen as taboo - things like sex, substance use, suicide and eating disorders.

Ensure girls have access to helpful, accurate information about health issues.

Give girls a chance to learn about how to manage stress and find solutions to life challenges with the support of their peers and group facilitators.

Provide opportunities to try new recreational activities and learn about resources in the community.

What happens when girls are given knowledge, resources and support?

- GIRLS develop stronger **critical thinking skills** that help them make sense of media and other pressures.
- GIRLS develop **leadership skills** that help them to identify things they would like to change in their communities and to **take action**.
- GIRLS develop a better sense of what other girls are facing, can **support each other** in making **healthy choices**, and feel supported in their own choices.
- GIRLS become **more confident** in asking questions about issues related to their health and accessing health services.

The GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION Approach

- Asset based:** Working from a positive-oriented lens that emphasizes the capacities of girls' own realities and experiences, the Girls Action approach builds on girls' strengths and community resources.
- Create and support girl specific spaces:** Girls report that they valued the experience of having a safe and confidential space to share their experiences with other girls.
- Use an integrated feminist approach:** girls express the need for girls groups to be culturally relevant, or to include facilitators who are aware of specific cultural differences and issues.
- Popular Education:** Popular education is a model that begins with an individual's personal experience and moves towards action. A popular education approach embraces girls as the

HOW Girls Action Can Support YOU to Take Action

- Start a girls group in your community!
- Attend an Amplify Training to learn more: girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/amplify
- Access our many resources for facilitators, community members and girls: girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/resource-center
- Access our research report *A Study of Girls' Perspectives on Girls' Groups*: bit.ly/XxNm4H
Group facilitators mentioned safe spaces to build relationships and learn skills as the major contribution of girls groups.



Additional Resources

- Girls Action Foundation: www.girlsactionfoundation.ca
- British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health: www.bcccewh.bc.ca

Knowledge + Resources + Support = Healthy Choices

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GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION

Founded in 1995, GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION is a charitable organization that supports the empowerment, leadership and healthy development of girls and young women across Canada.



The mission of the BRITISH COLUMBIA CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH is to improve the health of women by fostering collaboration on innovative, multi-disciplinary research endeavours and action-oriented approaches to women's health initiatives, women-centred programs, and health policy.