

HEALTHY EATING

IN RECREATION AND SPORT SETTINGS

GUIDELINES

2015



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Introduction

In 2011, under the leadership of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, the Healthy Eating in Recreation and Sport Provincial Steering Committee¹ initiated the development of a three-year strategic action plan titled Healthy Eating in Recreation and Sport Settings.

A key action of this plan is the development of provincial guidelines that support healthy eating in these settings.

In June 2012, the Province of Nova Scotia released *Thrive! A plan for a healthier Nova Scotia*.² This strategy is a policy and environmental approach to healthy eating and physical activity. *Thrive!* outlines priority actions to create environments that support Nova Scotians to make healthier choices.

One of the four directions in the strategy speaks to creating more opportunities to eat well and be active. A key action to achieving and building on related work already under way in the province is the development of healthy eating policies in places where people play, learn, work, and grow. One group of such places is recreation and sport settings.

The term “recreation and sport settings” encompasses an expansive list of facilities, clubs, organizations, and spaces where people go to be active, to socialize, celebrate, volunteer, spectate, and connect with their community. While these settings support active living, the foods and beverages served and sold often do not support health.

The purpose of these guidelines is to enable those who work, participate, and support activities in recreation and sport settings to change the food environment to support eating well.

THESE GUIDELINES HAVE FIVE MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- Support a cultural shift towards healthy foods and beverages.
- Increase access to, consumption of, and promotion of healthy foods and beverages.
- Decrease access to, consumption of, and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages.
- Create an environment that promotes overall health, with a focus on healthy eating.
- Support other sectors’ efforts in healthy eating policy development and implementation (e.g., public schools, regulated child care, health care, post-secondary education, governments, and food and beverage suppliers).

¹ The Healthy Eating in Recreation and Sport Provincial Steering Committee consists of representatives from the following organizations: Recreation Facility Association of Nova Scotia, Sport Nova Scotia, Recreation Nova Scotia, Community Links, Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, Halifax Regional Municipality Recreation Department, Town of Stellarton Recreation Department, DHW, then District Health Authorities, Department of Agriculture, Healthy Eating Nova Scotia, and Public Health Agency of Canada.

² Province of Nova Scotia, *Thrive! A plan for a healthier Nova Scotia* (Department of Health and Wellness, June 2012), 74.

Why recreation and sport settings?

Nova Scotia is a leader in Canada with a strong history of developing comprehensive healthy eating policies that support the health of our communities. In 2006, implementation of the *Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools* began, and in 2011, the *Standards for Food and Nutrition for Regulated Child Care Settings* were implemented. These policies and standards are guided by the evidence that healthy eating is influenced by more than individual choice, and the environment in which we play, work, and live greatly impacts decisions we make regarding foods and beverages. In addition, healthy eating policy work is emerging in other publicly funded institutions across Nova Scotia within health care, post-

secondary education, and provincial and municipal governments.

Nova Scotia is not alone in this area. Almost all provinces and territories have been engaged in creating healthy food environments in recreation and sport settings. These initiatives have been voluntary in nature and have been met with mixed success.^{3,4,5} These examples, however, provide key learnings used to build these guidelines. Offering healthy foods and beverages is becoming more common in recreation and sport settings. For example, Canada Games 2013 served only healthy foods in cafeterias and served no pop, deep-fried foods, or candy, among other foods.⁶

What is currently taking place in recreation and sport settings?

Recreation and sport settings are often the cornerstones of many communities, play a vital role in keeping Nova Scotians healthy by providing public space for physical activity, recreation, and sport. Much of the food and beverages served and sold in recreation and sport settings are inconsistent with the promotion of healthy eating. Foods and beverages high in fat, sugar, and sodium have been strongly linked to

many negative health outcomes as well as to overweight and obesity. Some studies,⁷ including a 2013 assessment in rink facilities in the Annapolis Valley, found that the majority of foods and beverages sold were those higher in fat, sugar, and sodium, and there were very few, if any, healthy options sold in these settings.

³ Patti-Jean Naylor et al., "Publically Funded Recreation Facilities: Obesogenic Environments for Children and Families?" *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 7, no. 5 (May 2010): 2208–21, doi: 10.3390/ijerph7052208.

⁴ Dana Lee Olstad, Kim D. Raine, and Linda J. McCargar, "Adopting and Implementing Nutrition Guidelines in Recreational Facilities: Public and Private Sector Roles. A Multiple Case Study," *BMC Public Health BMC Public Health* 12, no. 1 (January 2012): 376, doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-12-376.

⁵ Dana Lee Olstad et al., "Implementing the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth in a Recreational Facility," *Can J Diet Pract Res* 72, no. 4 (December 2011):177, doi: 10.3148/72.4.2011.e212.

⁶ CBC News, "Fried, processed foods banned from Canada Games," CBC News Online, August 8, 2013, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/fried-processed-foods-banned-from-canada-games-1.1342744.

⁷ Naylor et al., "Publically Funded Recreation Facilities: Obesogenic Environments for Children and Families?" 2208–21.

Current perceptions of Nova Scotians on foods and beverages in recreation and sport settings

In late fall 2013, the Department of Health and Wellness commissioned a public opinion poll on Nova Scotians' current perceptions toward foods and beverages in recreation and sport settings. When asked about the amount of healthy food choices available at recreation and sport settings, most respondents stated there were "some" or "few" healthy food and beverage options available to them.

Sixty-six per cent of those surveyed stated that recreation and sport settings should provide more healthy food and beverage options. When asked, 55 per cent of those surveyed strongly or somewhat favoured the reduction of cakes, pastries, and donuts at recreation and sport settings, and 50 per cent favoured a reduction in the supply of energy drinks, candy, and chocolate bars. Forty per cent of respondents favoured of a reduction in energy drinks.

How to Use these Guidelines

The intent of these guidelines is to assist those who work and support activities in recreation and sport settings to create environments that promote overall health, with a focus on healthy foods and beverages. The guidelines are based on best and promising practices and are proven to support increasing access to, consumption of, and promotion of healthy foods and beverages. These guidelines take a comprehensive approach, encompassing the environment and behaviours, as well as the actual foods and beverages

served and sold. These guidelines share similarities with those applicable in other settings.

Because of their comprehensive nature, some of the guidelines may not be applicable to a specific recreation and sport setting or situation. Implementing those that are applicable to particular situations is an important step in supporting the cultural shift towards healthy foods and beverages.

The guidelines will be revised as evidence and best practices emerge.

Scope of these guidelines

Recreation and sport settings encompass a wide variety of places where people may be active physically, socially, and culturally. Examples of recreation and sport settings for these guidelines include but are not limited to

- parks and playgrounds
- indoor and outdoor ice surfaces
- trails
- supervised beaches
- recreation and sport complexes
- places of faith
- ski hills
- seasonal recreation and sport camps
- public campgrounds
- sport fields
- aquatic facilities

- community performing arts centres
- golf courses
- tennis facilities
- community centres and clubhouses
- schools (after educational hours and weekends)

Types of organizations that are engaged in public recreation and sport as funders, program providers, and facility operators include but are not limited to

- municipal government
- provincial government
- federal government
- boards that own and manage facilities
- faith communities that run recreation and sport activities
- provincial, community based, not-for-profit organizations and agencies that promote and deliver physical activity, recreation, and sport
- colleges and universities with community recreation and sport programs and facilities
- school boards⁸



An illustration of the scope of the guidelines to the recreation and sport sector

⁸ School boards must follow the Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools.

Application of these guidelines

Applicable

These guidelines apply to wherever foods and beverages are served and sold within a recreation or sport setting. These may include but are not limited to

- vending machines
- canteens
- concession stands
- food carts
- catering
- café/restaurant
- dining halls
- tournaments
- sporting events
- hospitality suites
- special events
- meetings and/or training
- programming (all ages)

The guidelines also apply to all activities paid for, sponsored by, or hosted by one of the defined recreation and sport settings including but not limited to

- sponsorship
- fundraising
- purchasing gifts

Not Applicable

The guidelines do not apply to foods or beverages brought into a recreation and sport setting from home or purchased outside the setting by individuals for their own consumption.

Definitions

Branding is “a marketing feature that provides a name or symbol that legally identifies a company or its product and serves as a differentiation in the marketplace. ... The purpose of branding is to promote product sales by identifying a product with a lifestyle to which consumers aspire.”⁹

Formula restaurant is “devoted to the preparation and offering of food and beverage for sale to the public for consumption either on or off the premises and which is required by contractual or other arrangement to offer any of the following: standardized menus, ingredients, food preparation, decor, uniforms, architecture, or similar standardized features.”¹⁰

Fundraising is an activity designed to solicit funds to support an organization, group, or non-profit.

Marketing is a process companies use to influence consumer spending decisions and build brand awareness and brand loyalty. Marketing includes but is not limited to advertising, corporate branding, promotion, product packaging, corporate sponsorships, naming rights, the use of brand mascots, coupons, and product giveaways. Advertising is a visible form of marketing.

Special functions are events that occur infrequently throughout the year and are used to celebrate a special day or event (e.g., Canada Day, awards ceremony) rather than generate funds.

Sponsorship is supporting an organization or group through the provision of resources such as money or in-kind gifts or services.

Recreation and sport settings include formal organizations and agencies that operate at the local or provincial level and informal groups that support community-based events and clubs. Together they make up a sector that offers recreation and sport programs, services, and opportunities, and/or places to be physically active.

⁹ Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, *Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity?* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2006), 120, 136.

¹⁰ Calistoga, California, City Council Formula Restaurant Ban, Ordinance No. 519, 1996, <http://eatbettermovemore.org/sa/policies/pdf/text/Calistoga%20Formula%20Restaurant%20Ban.pdf>.

Healthy Eating in Recreation and Sport Settings Guidelines

The following guidelines are based on best and promising practices for healthy eating policies. Although there is no order of importance for these guidelines, many of them are interconnected and together create comprehensive healthy eating guidelines.

1.0 Foods and Beverages Served and Sold

Access to and consumption of healthy foods and beverages are essential for good health and optimal participation in recreation and sport settings. Consistent nutrient criteria within the settings where we grow, play, and work will support the cultural shift towards healthy foods and beverages as the norm. The nutrient criteria are based on the Food and Beverage Nutrient Criteria for publicly funded institutions, which were based on national nutrient criteria recommendations. Adoption of the nutrient criteria in recreation and sport settings will support consistent messages across a variety of settings in Nova Scotia.

Foods and beverages* served or sold will meet the following criteria:

1.1

The nutrient criteria definitions for categories of foods and beverages (maximum/moderate/minimum/not to be served or sold) will be consistent with those sold. Recommendations for use of a step-wise implementation plan by year four include

1.1.1

At least 50 per cent of foods and beverages sold and served will meet the maximum nutrient criteria.

1.1.2

No more than 10 per cent of foods and beverages sold and served will be from the minimum nutrient criteria group.

1.1.3

The remainder of foods and beverages sold and served will meet the moderate nutrient criteria.

1.2

The stated percentage of maximum/moderate/minimum for each type of service (e.g., vending, canteen, and programming), not per setting (e.g., facility, camp, and provincial organization), will inform the sale of foods and beverages.

*Tea and coffee are permitted.

1.3

When program activities are off-site, every effort will be made to choose foods and beverages that fit within the maximum and moderate nutrient criteria.

1.4

Priority placement will be given to those foods and beverages that meet the maximum and moderate nutrient criteria.

2.0 Promotion, Marketing and Advertising, and Sponsorship

Marketing has a strong influence on the foods and beverages we purchase and consume. Evidence is growing regarding the negative impacts on children of the marketing and advertising of unhealthy food and drinks.¹¹ Although children are not the only users of recreation and sport settings, consideration for the impact on this population segment should be a priority due to the potential greater negative influence. Unhealthy food and beverage promotion through sponsorship and advertisement has been found to be prevalent at sporting events.¹² Sponsorship may be an important and necessary funding support for recreation and sport activities, but some forms of sponsorship may be in direct conflict with the health-promoting benefits of taking part in these activities.

2.1 Partnerships between recreation and sport and businesses must always be designed to meet the health and educational needs of the participants, rather than serve commercial motives.

2.2 Marketing of any foods or beverages in the “Minimum Nutrition” and “Food and Beverages Not to be Served or

Sold” categories should not be allowed in recreation and sport settings.

2.3 Branding for food and beverage products in the “Minimum Nutrition” and “Food and Beverages Not to be Served or Sold” categories or from formula restaurants should not be allowed in recreation and sport settings.¹³

¹¹ Georgina Cairns, , Kathryn Angus, and Gerard Hastings, *The Extent, Nature and Effects of Food Promotion to Children: A Review of the Evidence to December 2008*, Prepared for the World Health Organization (December 2009).

¹² Georgina Cairns, , Kathryn Angus, and Gerard Hastings, *The Extent, Nature and Effects of Food Promotion to Children: A Review of the Evidence to December 2008*, Prepared for the World Health Organization (December 2009).

¹³ This includes signage, donations, and promotional items provided as a token of appreciation, recognition, or participation.

3.0 Fundraising

People participating in recreation and sport settings often fundraise for a variety of reasons, including to support clubs or players or to purchase materials and equipment that will enhance the programs they offer. Fundraising with non-food items or healthy foods and beverages provides an opportunity for recreation and sport settings to promote positive nutrition messages that reflect these guidelines and contribute to consistent messages with healthy eating.

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| <p>3.1 Non-food and non-beverage items are preferred and will be emphasized for fundraising.</p> | <p>3.2 If foods, beverages, and associated items are used for fundraising, only foods and beverages that meet the maximum and moderate nutrient criteria will be used.</p> |
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4.0 Special Functions

Food is a major part of our culture and of our celebrations. While healthy foods and beverages should be promoted, it is recognized that flexibility is necessary in what is offered during times of celebration. Special functions within the recreation and sport setting are defined as events that occur infrequently throughout the year (e.g., Canada Day celebration, awards ceremony, holiday event) and are used to celebrate a special day or event rather than generate funds.

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| <p>4.1 Foods and beverages that meet the maximum and moderate nutrient criteria will be provided and emphasized at special functions.</p> | <p>4.2 External groups renting/using facilities are encouraged to follow guideline 4.1.</p> |
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5.0 Nutrition Education

Nutrition education refers to formal and informal messages given by staff, volunteers, and coaches to those participating in activities in recreation and sport settings. Nutrition education should be aligned with the foods and beverages that meet the maximum and moderate nutrient criteria.

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| <p>5.1 If nutrition education and programs (for staff, volunteers, coaches, children, youth, adults, seniors) are offered through</p> | <p>sessions, newsletters, learning events, summer camps, etc., they will be based on Health Canada's key nutrition/healthy</p> |
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eating messages and directional statements for that population, found in *Eating Well with Canada's*

Food Guide (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php).

6.0 Food Safety

Nova Scotians must receive food that is safe and healthy to eat. Safe food helps prevent the development and spread of infectious diseases, such as gastroenteritis.

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- 6.1** All not-for-profit organizations within recreation and sport settings are to serve or sell food under the requirements outlined in Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture's Position Paper *Home Preparation of Potentially Hazardous Foods by Not-for-Profit Organizations* (<http://novascotia.ca/agri/documents/food-safety/home-preparation-NFP.pdf>).
- 6.2** Food establishments within recreation and sport settings that hold a food establishment permit from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture are to prepare and serve foods in accordance with Nova Scotia *Food Safety Regulations*, (www.novascotia.ca/JUST/regulations/regis/hpafdsaf.htm).

7.0 Breastfeeding

Nova Scotia, along with the World Health Organization, Health Canada, and the Canadian Paediatric Society, promote breastfeeding as the best way to feed infants and young children for optimal growth and development. Nova Scotia has provincial breastfeeding policy that promotes, protects, and supports breastfeeding. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act gives women the right to breastfeed in all public areas. Creating supportive spaces in communities, including recreation and sport settings, helps to remove barriers that may influence a woman's decision to begin and/or continue to breastfeed.

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- 7.1** A welcoming atmosphere will be provided to breastfeeding mothers to breastfeed as desired anywhere, anytime, in the setting.
- 7.2** If/when requested, facilities, organizations, etc., will work with breastfeeding mothers to provide a comfortable, private space for mothers to breastfeed.
- 7.3** As employers, recreation and sport settings will support employees who return to work after maternity leave to continue to breastfeed by providing space and allowing breaks to breastfeed and/or pump breast milk.

8.0 Food as Reinforcement

Using food to reinforce desired behaviours or achievements teaches people to eat when they are not hungry and to associate food with behaviour rather than nourishment. Finding alternatives to food to reinforce behaviours is an important part of providing a healthy food environment.

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| <p>8.1 Foods and beverages (healthy or unhealthy) are not used to reinforce positive behaviours (e.g., pizza party prize, treat day).</p> <p>8.2 Foods and beverages (healthy or unhealthy) are not used as a reward (e.g., player of the game</p> | <p>receiving a gift certificate for a local restaurant).</p> <p>8.3 Foods and beverages (healthy or unhealthy) are not withheld as a consequence for inappropriate behaviour.</p> |
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9.0 Nova Scotia Produce and Products

Nova Scotia produces and harvests an abundance of produce and food. *Locally grown* is defined as Nova Scotia first or Atlantic Canada.

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| <p>9.1 When possible, recreation and sport settings serve local, seasonal foods and beverages</p> | <p>that are harvested, produced, or manufactured in Nova Scotia or Atlantic Canada.</p> |
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10.0 Portion Sizes

Portion sizes should reflect those outlined in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. It is important to provide the right portion size to meet, not exceed, nutrient and energy needs (not too large and not too small a portion size).

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| <p>10.1 Portion sizes of foods and beverages available in recreation and sport settings</p> | <p>are to be consistent with recommendations in <i>Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide</i>.</p> |
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11.0 Dietary Considerations

Some people with medical conditions, allergies, or special dietary requirements follow specific dietary guidelines. These need to be considered when planning food to serve and sell in recreation and sport settings in order to include all those who may be participating or supporting activities.

- 11.1** Considerations based on cultural, faith, medical, and/or dietary requirements will be taken into account when developing menus, ordering catered food, etc.
- 11.2** Vegetarian options are provided as part of regular selection.
- 11.3** For programs (e.g., day camps involving children) allergy/anaphylaxis policies are developed and followed.

12.0 Clean Drinking Water

Water is an essential nutrient. Even mild dehydration can have negative effects on brain function, alertness, and energy levels.

- 12.1** Ensure access to potable water in all settings wherever possible.
- 12.2** Use tap water, if the water source is deemed safe.
- 12.3** Ensure adequate testing of water source for well water. If water is not potable, bottled water is to be used/available.
- 12.4** Use reusable water pitchers, glasses, and bottles whenever possible.
- 12.5** Promote consumption of water during recreation and sport activities.

13.0 Food Packaging and Environmental Consciousness

Nova Scotians are committed to taking steps to ensure their province is as clean as possible. Those serving or selling foods and beverages within recreation and sport settings are encouraged to continue to find new ways to reduce waste and support recycling and composting options.

- 13.1** Green bins and recycle bins are available within recreation and sport settings when applicable.
- 13.2** Recreation and sport settings will actively work to reduce waste from food, food and beverage packaging, and disposable dishes.
- 13.3** Bulk service, instead of individual portions, will be used when possible (e.g., for catering, provide a two-litre container of low-fat milk instead of individual-size portions of milk).
- 13.4** Water pitchers, glasses, dishes, and cutlery (all free from advertising) are provided and used whenever possible.
- 13.5** If reusable pitchers, glasses, dishes, and cutlery are not available, recyclable or biodegradable materials are to be used.

13.6 Energy-saving practices are to be used, including purchase of equipment (e.g., EnerGuide appliances).

13.7 Partnerships should be developed for bulk purchasing wherever possible.

Recommended Implementation of Food and Beverage Nutrient Criteria

Healthy eating policy work in other settings has shown value in implementing nutrient criteria over a number of years. The following is a proposed implementation schedule, although groups may choose to implement at a pace that meets their needs.



- **Develop healthy eating policy for your setting/organization.**
- **Remove deep fat fryers and/or remove energy drinks and relaxation drinks.**



- **Increase offerings of foods and beverages that fall into the maximum and moderate nutrient criteria, and decrease foods and beverages that fall into the minimum nutrient criteria.**



- **At least 50 per cent of foods and beverages sold and served will meet the maximum nutrient criteria.**
- **No more than 10 per cent of foods and beverages sold and served will be from the minimum nutrient criteria group.**
- **The remainder of foods and beverages sold and served will meet the moderate nutrient criteria.**

Food and Beverage Nutrient Criteria Categories:

Maximum Nutrition Foods and Beverages

Foods and beverages rated as maximum are part of the four food groups of *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Foods and beverages in this category are considered the healthiest options and should be chosen most often. They are characterized by the following:

- high in essential nutrients
- low in saturated and artificial trans fats
- little or no added fat, sugar, and sodium
- higher levels of naturally occurring fibre
- minimally processed
- no sugar substitutes

EXAMPLE **maximum pizza**

Whole wheat crust, low-fat mozzarella, vegetables, and roasted chicken

OTHER EXAMPLES

Fresh fruit, vegetables and hummus, 1 per cent milk, some yogurts

Moderate Nutrition Foods and Beverages

Foods and beverages rated as moderate are part of the four food groups of *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* but provide fewer nutritional benefits than maximum rated foods and may have high levels of fat, sodium, and/or sugar. Foods and beverages in this category should be chosen less often than maximum nutrition foods and beverages. They are characterized by the following:

- contain essential nutrients
- added fat, sugar, and/or sodium
- lower levels of naturally occurring fibre
- have undergone some processing
- no sugar substitutes

EXAMPLE moderate pizza

White pizza crust, regular mozzarella, vegetables, and lean ground beef

OTHER EXAMPLES

Some yogurts, some granola bars and muffins

Minimum Nutrition Foods and Beverages

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide states that the intake of foods and beverages with little or no nutritional benefits should be limited. If a food or beverage does not fit maximum or moderate nutrient criteria and is not on the "Not Permitted" list (see below), it is considered a minimum choice. (See www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/maintain-adopt/limit-eng.php.) They are characterized by the following:

- little to no nutritional value
- very high levels of added fat, sugar, and/or sodium sugar substitutes, caffeine, and/or processing
- may replace nutritious foods when available as meals or snacks

EXAMPLE minimum pizza

White crust, mozzarella, pepperoni

Foods and Beverages Not Recommended to be Sold or Served

Foods and beverages identified as not recommended to be sold or served are known to be harmful or have uncertain long-term effects. They are identified as the following:

- energy drinks and shots, all brands
- relaxation beverages,* all brands
- any foods deep fried during preparation

*Relaxation beverages are marketed as a way to help people relax and unwind without the use of alcohol. They have ingredients such as melatonin (a hormone that helps with sleep), GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), Threonine, tryptophan, valerian root, camomile, and passion flower. These ingredients are known for promoting relaxation and calm along with drowsiness and reduced alertness. Many of these products are not regulated by Health Canada or the Food and Drug Administration of the United States and are not tested for effectiveness. The amount used of these ingredients is unknown, so there may be too much or too little to have the desired calming effect. Most of these products are labelled not to be taken by children, by pregnant or breastfeeding women, or if operating a vehicle.

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