



Using food as a reward can have some effect on the eating habits of young people. Often it is unhealthy foods such as candy, cookies or chips that are used as rewards. Help young people to build healthy eating habits by using non-food rewards.

- Healthy eating promotes good health and supports success both at school and in other areas of life
- Eating habits are learned at a young age and these habits often continue through life
- Disordered eating is linked to poor eating habits
- Foods that are sticky and high in sugar can also cause tooth decay

### Why Should I Choose Non-Food Rewards?

- Food rewards connect food to mood. It may promote poor eating habits by using food as a comfort or reward when the person is not hungry.
- Food rewards that are unhealthy may send a mixed message about healthy eating.
- Children who have an allergy may be put at risk or feel left out.

Consider promoting internal rewards that exist within each person. Internal rewards can help to excite a person to finish a task and may also keep them more interested and focused.

Some examples of internal rewards:

- Feeling excited and happy by getting all the answers right after learning a new math skill.
- Having fun and being challenged after going to soccer or dance practice.

If you decide to use external rewards, here are some ideas for non-food rewards.

No Cost Alternatives	Low Cost Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A write up in a newsletter or on a bulletin board, announcement on the P.A. system</li> <li>• Allowed to sit with friends</li> <li>• Have class outdoors</li> <li>• Reduced or no homework</li> <li>• Alternative homework (e.g. report on a topic chosen by student)</li> <li>• Watch a movie that relates to the curriculum</li> <li>• Listen to music while working</li> <li>• Give more time for a project</li> <li>• Bonus marks on project or test</li> <li>• “Coach for the day” or team leader</li> <li>• Extra time to do favourite activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class or group field trip</li> <li>• School supplies (e.g. pencils, pens, marker, post-it notes, white out, bookmark)</li> <li>• Certificate of recognition</li> <li>• Activity items (e.g. jump rope, Frisbee, ball, hacky sack)</li> <li>• Water bottle, tea bags, shoe laces, lip balm, deck of cards, key chain, toothbrush</li> <li>• A plant, or a pot, soil and plant seeds</li> <li>• Used books in good condition</li> </ul>

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>  
 or email [phem@vch.ca](mailto:phem@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **GK.600.H43**  
 © Vancouver Coastal Health, June 2014