

5-STEP GUIDE

TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLBEING
OF CHILDREN WITH **HEALTHY KIDS OF
SEINÄJOKI®**



HEALTHY KIDS OF
Seinäjoki®

Seinäjoki has become a model city in the fight against childhood obesity with results that have attracted international attention. We have managed to reduce obesity levels of children with nearly 50% over a period of five years.

The Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki Model focuses on the holistic wellbeing of children, through increased activity and sports during school and day care days, and special attention to healthy nutrition and lifestyle.

Implementation of actions, that are in line with the Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki Model, can have a remarkable preventative impact on avoiding the occurrence of obesity related diseases at a later age, not to forget the impact on improved social inclusion and children's mental wellbeing.

We have collected this 5-step guide to inspire and encourage you to take action in promoting health and wellbeing of children, youth and families in your own area.

As you'll see it's not rocket science, but to succeed in this mutual challenge it demands systematically executed work by many on different levels.



1. Stop and Observe

In 2013 the City of Seinäjoki set the target to reduce obesity and overweight among children and young people. The target got set after a wide national research revealed concerning development of childhood obesity and overweight. Something had to be done.

The goal was to promote healthy changes in the lifestyle of children and families with lifestyle guidance, nutrition and physical exercise. The good achievements brought international recognition to the City of Seinäjoki, World Health Organisation naming the results as "Seinäjoki Miracle".

We want to encourage you to take action, if you are fighting with similar challenges in your own local area, school or other entity. What to do first? Trust your gut and stop, if you feel that current situation is not the way to go. Analyze what the situation is right now. Get information about children's health in your area through research data. To change a regime in current health and wellbeing structure is not a sprint, it is a marathon. You'll need a dedicated team around you to make the change happen.

Do you have research data to support your observations in your area?

Who do you need with you to proceed and succeed?



2. Gather Forces

This is probably the most time consuming phase of the process. Visualize all areas of expertise and actors you need with you and to whom tackling this issue could bring added value.

Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki's holistic approach and the focus is on multiprofessional and multidimensional cooperation. For example pay attention on the structures and what services could be provided by companies or partnerships with NGO's. Health and well-being promotion offers a good set up for business opportunities. For example builders, interior designers, architects, AI and digitalization developers, social innovators, pedagogists and many others can bring solutions that are innovative and complement changes in the structures or services.

Remember to speak about the subject in a way that move the hearer's heart and power up your message with economic facts. The same message might not work for public authorities and companies.

How do you approach possible co-operators?

What is your core message for different actors?



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3. Get Key Players to Commit

There is no easy way to be heard and get people inspired with what you have to say. Long term commitment is crucial in achieving sustainable results. A common strategy involves that all departments, from municipal planning and culture to sports and leisure, contribute to a specific plan which is then assessed after certain time spans. Sport facility planning by the town technical unit, where school and day care unit yards are designed to encourage physical activity, can be used as an example of a strategy to increase physical activity.

Health and wellbeing promotion are issues that need scientific background. Collect data and if possible get someone to do research for your purposes. Numbers, figures and results are convincing. Ensure that all parties share the same vision and work towards the same goal.

**What is the added value key player get when committed to health and wellbeing promotion?
Is the benefit direct or indirect to the actors?**



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4. Collaborate between Decision Makers, Families and Society

Enhancement of overall wellbeing of children and families should be set as a strategic priority in communal decision making and planning. There is an overwhelming amount of health related information available to back-up decision making. As was stated before, health and wellbeing promotion takes time and commitment. Recommendations of actions in preventing obesity can be used as a basic guideline. Regular monitoring of health throughout childhood should be provided by social and health services.

To receive effective results families and the society should work together, side by side. Decision maker's and families awareness of obesity related risks leads to more probable implementation of healthy lifestyle in everyday circumstances.

Alongside with enhanced possibilities to physical activity during school and day care days, nutrition forms another critical cornerstone of the multidimensional approach to health and wellbeing promotion. Every child deserves healthy meals. In heart-healthy day cares and schools the focus is on reducing sugar, fat and salt consumption from of food and snacks served. If possible, collaborate with food service providers and families to encourage healthy choices to school or day care lunch.

Board and open collaboration leads to great real life results and successful implementation of Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki® model.



5. Time to Measure, Monitor and Promote

Nobody knows how good your results are unless you share them. Every country, culture and local area has its own characteristic set up to promote health and wellbeing. In the field of health and wellbeing promotion comparison to other scientific results or models is fruitful. Some new approaches can be assimilated to your model in the ever continuing development of health and wellbeing management.

Be proud to lift achievements and results to spotlight.

What makes your model or results unique?

How can someone else benefit from your findings?

Can you conceptualize your results?



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Conclusions

Finland is known for its excellent education system, pure food, high quality of life, good governance and children's health and wellbeing. Unhealthy lifestyle and obesity still challenge us, even in our circumstances. In Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki® we have created a brilliant concept out of Finland's high-brand ingredients for children's overall wellbeing. We hope that this guide inspires you to set the snowball rolling in your area. There isn't only one way to promote health and wellbeing of children.

Thank you for reading the guide! Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki® model develops, as does this guide. On your screen you see the 1.0 version of the 5-step guide. As said, the guide has been written to inspire to take action!

Deeper insight to the Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki® model is presented yearly in the International Healthy Kids of Seinäjoki Conference or through city visits and private educational travels. Don't hesitate to contact us, if you want to point out a new perspective or wish to visit us. I'll be happy to discuss further or arrange a visit to Seinäjoki!

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