



Making Active Choices Every Day

It is becoming increasingly important for parents to ensure that their children are active outside of school hours. Recent studies show that:

- almost 60% of today’s children don’t meet average fitness standards; 40% of five- to eight-year-olds are classified as obese
- the average Canadian child watches more than 26 hours of television and spends up to 30 hours sitting in school each week
- only 766 out of more than 15,800 Canadian schools have been recognized for quality physical education programs on a daily basis
- these days, play usually consists of computers and video games
- for convenience and safety, children are driven most places

Regular physical activity

- enhances academic achievement
- stimulates concentration, heightens memory and expands problem-solving skills
- decreases aggressive behaviours
- decreases susceptibility to stress
- may be more important than milk in bone growth
- lowers likelihood and levels of smoking and alcohol consumption in youth
- promotes activity and fitness levels into adulthood

For children and youth, regular physical activity is essential for normal healthy growth and development. It’s time to take action and get children interested in being active.

Play active games

- Try “active play” charades in which one person acts out a game or activity and others guess what it is.

- Make up a dance routine to your children’s favourite music. Compare your heart rates at the end of each dance.

Arrange outings with other families

- Challenge them to a game of catch or tag or create an obstacle course using objects from the house or yard. Keep a chart of the time it takes everyone to run the course and challenge everyone to improve their time.

Form a “family club”

- Meet regularly during the week or on weekends at a time when everyone is free. Try out different family activities like roller blading, skipping rope, playing tag and kickball. Use a soft foam ball or balloon to play indoor games like balloon softball or badminton. Record the activity in a scrapbook and have all “members” write what they liked about the game.

Be active while watching TV

- Stretch and run on the spot for three minutes before and after every TV show.
- Have a quick game of catch with a foam ball during commercial breaks.
- See who can do the most jumping jacks during commercials and who can increase the number they do over a month.
- Play “remote control hot potato” during commercial breaks by passing the remote control from person to person — whoever is left holding it at the end of the break has to lead the family exercise session after the show.

Active Living Quiz

- How frequently do you and your children do things like walking, hiking or biking together?
 - a) At least 2 or more times a week
 - b) About once a week
 - c) About once a month
 - d) Never
- Do you and/or your spouse participate in sports, fitness classes or workouts?
 - a) Yes – 3 or more times a week
 - b) Yes – at least once a week
 - c) Yes – but infrequently (less than once a week)
 - d) No
- On average, how many hours a day in total does your child sit watching television and videos and playing computer games?
 - a) 6 or more hours a day
 - b) 3 to 5 hours a day
 - c) 1 to 2 hours a day
 - d) Less than an hour a day
- Does your child participate in physical education classes at school?
 - a) Yes – 4 to 5 days a week
 - b) Yes – 1 to 3 times a week
 - c) Yes – about once a week
 - d) No
- Does your child participate in school-based physical activities that are not part of their physical education classes?
 - a) Yes – 3 to 5 days a week
 - b) Yes – 1 to 2 times a week
 - c) Yes – less than once a week
 - d) No
- Does your child participate in physical activities or sports that are not school-based?
 - a) Yes – 3 to 5 days a week
 - b) Yes – 1 to 2 times a week
 - c) Yes – less than once a week
 - d) No

Active Living Score Board

QUESTION	A	B	C	D
#1	3	2	1	0
#2	3	2	1	0
#3	0	1	2	3
#4	3	2	1	0
#5	3	2	1	0
#6	3	2	1	0

If You Scored Between:

- 0-5 *Two Thumbs Down:* It’s time to get your family moving!
- 6-11 *One Thumb Up, One Thumb Down:* Not bad, but there’s always room for improvement!
- 12-18 *Two Thumbs Up:* Congratulations! Keep it up.

