

FAMILY GUIDE TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN (6-9 years of age)

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS FUN!

- At home • At school • At play • Inside or outside
- On the way to and from school • With family and friends

Making physical activity a part of the day is fun and healthy. Encouraging kids to build physical activity into their daily routine helps to create a pattern that may stay with them for the rest of their lives.



Getting Started

This booklet is for all those who have children in their lives: parents, caregivers, guardians, grandparents, foster parents, etc.

Raising healthy children

Over half of Canada's children are not active enough for healthy growth and development. Health professionals are concerned and think it is important to teach children about physical activity and their health and to encourage them to do more.

Additional evidence suggests that a lack of physical activity is dangerous to their health and can be a major contributor to weight gain and obesity. From 1981 to 1996, the prevalence of obesity tripled among boys and girls.

A partnership for health

Health Canada, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, provincial partners and key children and youth organizations have worked together to produce a set of *Guide* support resources to help get children and youth moving.

These resources have been developed to help you and your children understand the importance of physical activity and how it affects the body.

The resources include:

- this booklet for families and caregivers
- a *Gotta Move Magazine for Children*
- a *Teacher's Guide*

These have all been designed to help increase physical activity in children up to the age of 9. There is a similar set of materials for youth age 10 to 14.

We need your support at home.

We are encouraging families, caregivers, teachers, health care providers and community leaders to reinforce each other in these efforts to increase physical activity among Canada's children.

"How do I do that?" you might ask. You can do it by communicating with them about the importance of physical activity, how it affects their health and how to get started in increasing the amount of physical activity they do.

Take positive action now and lower the risks.

Today, most children know about *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, understand that smoking is bad for them, and take an active interest in the environment. It's time to attach the same importance to physical activity. The health of your child depends on it.

The goal is to get Canada's children moving more.

CALL TO ACTION

for families, educators, physicians and community leaders

Canada's Guidelines for Increasing Physical Activity in Children

1. **Increase** the time **currently** spent on physical activity by a total of at least 30 minutes **more** per day.
2. **Reduce** "non-active" time spent on TV, video, computer games and surfing the Internet, starting with at least 30 minutes **less** per day.

You need to encourage children to build up their physical activity throughout the day. The 30 minutes more of physical activity can be accumulated in bouts as short as 5 or 10 minutes.

This increase in physical activity should include:

* Moderate activities like brisk walking, skating, biking, swimming and playing outdoors

** Vigorous activities like running and soccer

Here's how it works!

Build up physical activity throughout the day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes

| | Daily increase in moderate* physical activity (Minutes) | | Daily increase in vigorous** physical activity (Minutes) | | Total Daily increase in physical activity (Minutes) | Daily decrease in non-active time (Minutes) |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| Month 1 | at least 20 | + | 10 | = | 30 | 30 |
| Month 2 | at least 30 | + | 15 | = | 45 | 45 |
| Month 3 | at least 40 | + | 20 | = | 60 | 60 |
| Month 4 | at least 50 | + | 25 | = | 75 | 75 |
| Month 5 | at least 60 | + | 30 | = | 90 | 90 |

Congratulations! Daily active time is part of a healthy lifestyle.

Note: Children who are already quite active should record all their moderate and vigorous activities for a few days. They can total up the minutes, then progress gradually from there until they reach at least 90 minutes of daily physical activity.

THE GOAL

Increase children's physical activity every month until they are doing at least 90 minutes more per day. Congratulate them every step of the way. Put a progress chart such as the *Physical Activity Chart* on the refrigerator or your bulletin board! Talk about the goals and accomplishments during family time or when doing other activities with the children.

You can do it! Make physical activity a lifestyle choice for the whole family and build it into the daily routine.

Physical activity can be fun for the whole family

Physical activity can be fun for you and your children. If your children prefer not to be active, this is a problem, but there are things that you can do to change their behaviours.

Kids love computers, video games and television. While these activities can be educational and contribute to mental development, children need physical activity for healthy physical growth and development.

Raising healthy children requires an investment in physical activity.

While participation in sports is encouraged, children need to know that sports are not the only way to stay active. Not all children enjoy competition. For those who don't, physical activity alternatives such as hiking, household chores, cycling, walking and others are essential.

As a family member, you can work with your children to encourage healthy behaviours by setting some physical activity ground rules. Encourage your children to play outside and try to be an active role model yourself. Usually, active parents will have active kids. It's important to start physical activity early as inactive kids may become inactive adults. Tie rewards to physical activity goals – so much physical activity and then you can have so much TV or computer time or better still, reward them with physical activity opportunities. It works.

If your children are not active, talk to a physical activity counsellor at your local recreation centre or "Y" or to a physical education teacher at your child's school or to your family doctor about how to get them active.

Keeping children active:

- Builds strong bones and strengthens muscles
- Maintains flexibility
- Maintains and achieves a healthy weight
- Promotes good posture and balance
- Improves fitness
- Strengthens the heart
- Improves physical self-esteem
- Increases relaxation
- Enhances healthy growth and development
- Helps them meet new friends

Ways to Change Behaviour

Research shows that the following five steps work together to change behaviour and establish new lifestyles.

- 1 Develop Awareness:** Involve children in the process. They will be far more motivated if they play a part in the decision-making process. Help them become aware of how much activity they do now and how inactive they may be. This is essential to the next step.
- 2 Set Goals:** Goal-setting helps children check their own progress. If you have more than one child, it might be helpful to set a goal to which they all can contribute. Encourage small steps. Strive for the goal, check the results to find out what is working and what is not working, revise the goal and try again.
- 3 Give Feedback and Praise:** Talk about what the child did to be active everyday and praise and reward small steps.
- 4 Get Children to Agree to the Plan:** Talk often about physical activity goals with the whole family to encourage the children to do what they said they would do.
- 5 Reward and Recognize Change:** Reinforce new behaviour and celebrate successes through rewards and recognition.

Try the section "Physical Activity is Fun" in the *Gotta Move Magazine* with your child.

Post a copy of the *Physical Activity Chart* on the fridge. Work with the children to establish some realistic goals. Use the stickers to chart progress. Reward their good efforts!

Here are some ways to offer encouragement...

- Talk about physical activity as an important part of staying healthy
- Read the material in the *Gotta Move Magazine* with your children and then discuss it
- Encourage your children to try new physical activities and be patient as they learn
- Ask them what physical activities they like to do
- Build physical activity into your child's daily routine
- Be a role model by being physically active yourself
- Be physically active with your child
- Post the *Physical Activity Chart* on the refrigerator and encourage your child to use the stickers to show what he or she has done during the day
- Praise your children's physical activities. Building their confidence is critical to success
- Encourage them to participate in sports and physical activities in school and in the community
- Enrol children in community physical activity programs
- When your child asks for a ride somewhere, suggest that they walk, run or bike instead



Here are some things you can do together...

- Walk children to school
- Go for a walk after supper and set some family goals that you can record
- Put on some music and dance with your children
- Take the dog for a walk and let the children help
- Ask the children to help you carry in the groceries
- Go to the neighbourhood playground and help your children to climb and swing
- Play hide and seek
- Teach children the skills they need to be active like jumping rope, throwing and hitting a ball, kicking a ball, running, dancing, skating, etc.
- Teach children to ride bicycles and then ride with them
- Borrow some basic equipment such as balls and bats, frisbees, bikes, in-line skates, ice skates and toboggans, and teach them how to use them
- Go on a treasure hunt
- Have the children help with snow clearing and make a snow fort
- Go skating, skiing or swimming with your children
- Let the children help you rake the leaves and make a game of it

Here are some things you can do to encourage and support physical activity in your community...

- Encourage neighbourhood outdoor games
- Be a coach or organizer of physical activities in your community
- Advocate for more physical activity programs and facilities in schools and communities
- Advocate for increased child safety in neighbourhoods, playgrounds and parks and on the roads.

Safety matters

When children are trying new activities and becoming more active, encourage them to be careful. Be sure they wear the appropriate protective equipment - for example, a helmet when cycling. For vigorous sports activities, get them to concentrate on learning the skills first then gradually increase the intensity.



Use the information in this *Family Guide* together with the *Gotta Move Magazine* to find out what your children like to do. If you start with something they like, it will be easier to keep them motivated. You can complete the "Physical Activity and Your Body" section in the Magazine with your children to explore more of their interests.

Read on and find examples of what other families like you have done to use these steps to encourage their children to be more active.

Here's how some families have tried to get started on the road to better health

Single Parent Decides to Get Active with Her Kids

Susan is a single parent who works full-time. By the time she gets home from work and makes supper she is really tired. She has two children, Josef and Maria, ages 6 and 9, who spend most evenings watching TV or playing video games.

One day, Susan was watching a program on child health after the children went to bed. She learned that children need more physical activity than they are getting for healthy growth and development. She sighed, "What can I do?"

She decided to talk to a physical activity counsellor at her local recreation centre. The counsellor suggested some activities for her to try with her children and gave her a copy of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children*, the *Physical Activity Chart* and the *Family Guide*.

That weekend, she talked to Josef and Maria about them all becoming more active. They made a plan to do something together everyday. Some days they would walk, some days they would go for a swim at the recreation centre, some days they would stay home and dance to some favourite music or even work together to clean the apartment! Maria was less active than Josef and she wanted to take small steps. Susan agreed because she did not know how much energy she had either.

The children decided to use the *Physical Activity Chart* and put it on the fridge. They committed to do one activity a day as a family, but the children were free to do other things on their own and these would also count on the schedule.

Every day at supper they'd talk about what they had done and they would put stickers on the *Physical Activity Chart* for each activity. If they didn't do much one day, they would promise to do more the next. After a month, Susan had more energy and she and the children were spending far less time in front of the TV. When they added up their activities on the *Physical Activity Chart*, they had indeed increased their physical activities by a total of 30 minutes a day, sometimes by doing it in short bouts of 5 to 10 minutes. They were pleased and set the goals for the second month.



New Canadians Get Active with their Children

Fariba and Achmed are new Canadians. They have moved to a new country with very different customs than the ones they left behind. Their children, Tariq and Sari, immediately became fascinated by television and video games and barely went outside except to go to school.

The parents were concerned. They knew that more physical activity was essential to their children's health, but it was an ongoing battle to get their children, ages 6 and 8, to go outside to play.

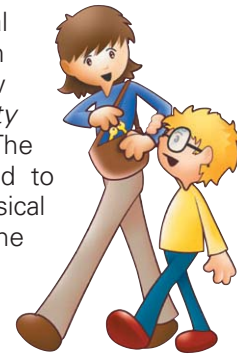
One day, Tariq came home with an assignment from school which gave the parents an opportunity to get involved. The task was to add up all the physical activity done by the family. The teacher had given them the *Physical Activity Chart* to record their information.

Fariba and Achmed sat down with the children and went through the *Physical Activity Guide for Children* with them. They talked about increasing their physical activity by at least 30 minutes a day and reducing their TV/computer time by at least 30 minutes a day. The children were surprised at how little physical activity they were actually doing.

The parents asked the children how they could increase their physical activity time and promised to do some activities with them as well. Each night, before bed, the children would review

their day and fill out the *Physical Activity Chart* that the teacher had given Tariq. The children and the parents were allowed to count each 5- to 10-minute period of physical activity during the day. By walking to the mall instead of taking the bus, using the stairs instead of the elevator, going for a family walk or romp in the park after supper, playing ball and doing yard work like raking the leaves, the whole family's activity levels quickly climbed. Now they just have to keep it up!

After a month, the whole family had increased their physical activities by 30 minutes a day and they set a new goal.



Children Get Their Parents Off the Couch

Kassi and Jamie are eight-year-old twins. They do everything together. One day after school they came bouncing in the door and said, "Mom and Dad, this family needs to stop watching TV and start doing stuff that's active. Our teacher says it's not healthy to sit around."

Their parents, Sharon and Bill, looked at each other. They thought Kassi and Jamie were active kids, but now the children were convinced that they had to do more. Kassi pulled out a copy of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children* from her knapsack and handed it to her parents to read.

When their parents finished reading they said, "So, what are we going to do?" "We need a plan," said Kassi. "A family plan," echoed Jamie. "If we want to be healthy, we need to be active...all of us."

"OK," said Dad, "What do you think we should do?" The children couldn't think of any ideas.

Dad suggested that they talk to a physical activity counsellor at the local "Y". The counsellor sat down with them and helped them come up with a good list of activities and develop a general plan. They thought of a family swim once a week, summer and winter, skating in the winter, family bike riding during the other seasons, and walks in the park. They also listed family soccer, playing catch, and yard work. The twins loved to help their dad out in the garden, especially pushing the wheelbarrow.

They decided on a plan to get started and wrote it down. Next they put the *Physical Activity Chart* on the refrigerator and used the stickers to record what they had done for at least 10 minutes each day.

After following the plan for a couple of weeks, the family talked and looked at *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children* again. They noticed that it emphasized strength and flexibility activities as well as games and aerobic activities, so they set some new goals.

Sharon and Bill both work full-time so they had a busy life. They were lucky though, because Sharon's company had a small fitness centre offering classes, and the plant where Bill worked was next door to the "Y". They thought they could put their lunch hours to good use and do some activity then. This way it wouldn't interfere with their family time with the twins. Sharon signed up for a yoga class and Bill had a weight-training program set up for him that he could do three times a week. He was really happy about this because he enjoyed working out when he was younger but had let it go since the twins were born.

They thought about strength and flexibility activities for the twins and realized that with all their activity on the playground at school – climbing and swinging and jumping – that they were getting lots of that already. The twins walked to school regularly, too.



Building New Habits

Janine was overweight and tired all the time. Her guardians, Mel and Jack had taken her to the doctor on many occasions and the doctor had told them that she must become more active. They had tried all sorts of ideas to help Janine, but nothing had worked. The only thing she wanted to do was to watch TV and read.

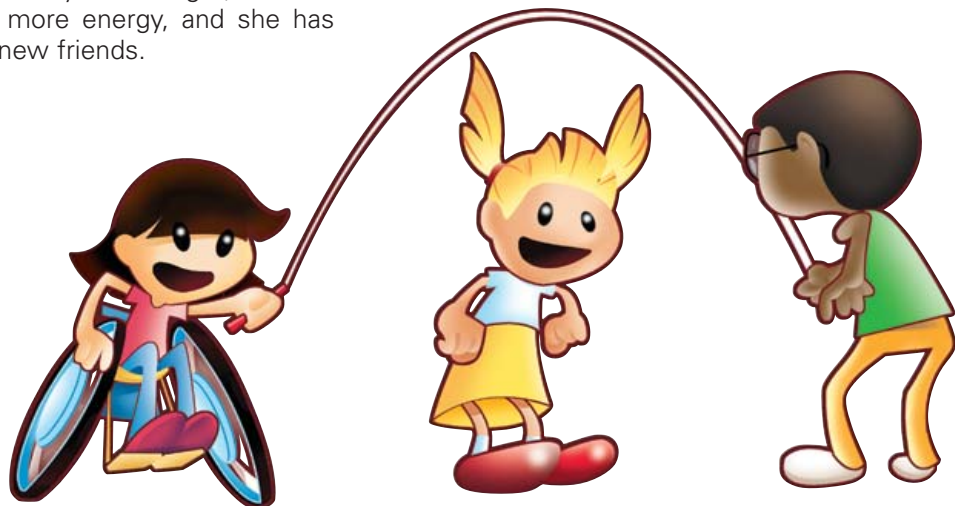
They lived in a townhouse complex and there were lots of kids around that she could play with, but she hardly ever went outside. When she did, the other kids called her names and teased her.

She was only seven years old, but even climbing the stairs at home made her huff and puff. The family was desperate. One day, they saw an interesting poster at the shopping centre. A new class was starting to help overweight kids become physically active. Janine's guardians were determined to take her. Maybe if she could be with others like her, she would try.



On the day the program started, they all went. They made sure she had running shoes and comfortable clothes so that she could participate easily. At first she was reluctant to try anything, but as the other kids got involved so did she. The program included a class three days a week. The coach gave Janine's guardians some ideas for activities to do with her on the days she did not come to class, such as walking to school, walking to the mall, walking to the park, limiting time in front of the TV, and playing in the yard with her.

It took several weeks, but eventually Janine started to enjoy the program. Jack and Mel noticed that she was more willing to walk and do chores around home. Little by little Janine increased her activity level and recorded her progress on the *Physical Activity Chart*. Her guardians are proud of her and give her regular encouragement. She is now starting to add vigorous activity to her program, a bit at a time. And, much to everyone's delight, she seems happier, has more energy, and she has made some new friends.



Dad Was the Hockey Coach But...

Jean-Pierre was an active guy who liked to play hockey and swim and ride his bike. He also coached little league hockey. His wife, Suranne, read a lot and was very inactive. They both worked full-time and were often tired by the end of the day. Their children, Louise and Sylvain, didn't much care for physical activity. Louise liked to read and Sylvain loved his video games.

Jean-Pierre wanted the kids to play hockey, but they couldn't skate very well and said they didn't want to do any sports. Jean-Pierre was sure the children needed to be more active. He also wanted his wife to be more active and hoped she might use her lunch hours for this. One day, he talked to another coach about the problem. The coach told him about *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children* and said they all needed to increase their physical activity levels by at least 30 minutes a day. Jean-Pierre called Health Canada's 1-888 number and ordered *Canada's Physical Activity Guides*, one for children and one for adults, and he also ordered the *Family Guide* and the *Gotta Move Magazine for Children*.

When the materials arrived, Jean-Pierre called a family meeting. He told the children and Suranne that he wanted everyone to get more physically active. He said it is not healthy to sit around all the time. The body needs to move! The family agreed to give it a try. Jean-Pierre posted *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children* on the fridge. The family agreed they'd do one activity together every day and record what they did.

They had an ambitious plan. Some days the family would skate so the kids could improve their skating skills. Other days they would play in the park after supper, go for a walk, play ball, walk to Gramma's house, or go swimming at the local pool, and on the weekends they would do chores and shop for groceries. Suranne would start going for a fast walk on her lunch hours, too. This was a real challenge for everyone except Jean-Pierre.

After two weeks, Jean-Pierre called another meeting. They had already missed several days of activities for a variety of reasons. They said they'd try and do better. Jean-Pierre had to keep prodding to get his children and his wife to be more active, but eventually it worked. Now the family makes physical activity a part of their daily routine. They review their activities often and set new goals for themselves on a regular basis. Louise and Sylvain have both joined the hockey league, which makes Jean-Pierre very proud of them. And, most amazing, Suranne is taking a beginner hockey-coaching course!



Endorsers

The following organizations have endorsed *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and the support resources*.

- Active & Safe Routes to School
- Arthritis Society
- Assembly of First Nations
- Association of Local Public Health Agencies
- Block Parent Program of Canada
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine
- Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women & Sport & Physical Activity
- Canadian Association for Young Children
- Canadian Association of Principals
- Canadian Child Care Federation
- Canadian Council on Social Development
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute
- Canadian Home and School Federation
- Canadian Institute of Child Health
- Canadian Intramural Recreation Association
- Canadian Lung Association
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Canadian Paediatric Society
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Psychiatric Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- Canadian Public Health Association
- Canadian School Boards Association
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology
- Canadian Special Olympics
- Canadian Teachers' Federation
- Children's Safety Association of Canada
- Child Welfare League of Canada
- Coalition for Active Living
- College of Family Physicians of Canada
- Dietitians of Canada
- Family Service Canada
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Girl Guides of Canada – Guides du Canada
- Go for Green
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
- Lifesaving Society
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- National Institute of Nutrition
- Osteoporosis Society of Canada
- Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada
- Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada
- Safe Kids Canada
- Scouts Canada
- United Way of Canada
- Victoria Order of Nurses for Canada
- Vanier Institute of the Family
- YMCA Canada
- YWCA Canada

Provincial Children's Hospitals:

- Alberta Children's Hospital
- Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia
- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- Hospital for Sick Children
- IWK Health Centre
- Janeway Children's Hospital
- Montreal Children's Hospital
- Stollery Children's Hospital
- Winnipeg Children's Hospital

Distributed by...



Active bodies need energy

Follow *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to make wise food choices.



For more information:

Call **1-888-334-9769** or visit the website at **www.healthcanada.ca/paguide**. Please use this *Family Guide* with additional *Guide* support resources.

Canada

