



We All Win When  
**CHILDREN**  
are Healthy and Well



A leading health issue in our society today is the rising obesity and weight gain in children. As a parent or caregiver, there are a number of things that you can do to help reverse this disturbing trend. You can play an important role in helping kids lead a healthy active lifestyle by encouraging and supporting children to adopt healthy practices when you lead by example. Show them that it is fun to be healthy and active.

#### BE A GREAT ROLE MODEL

Think about what a difference it would make if you limited your own screen time and became more active. It's important to 'walk the talk'. The truth is, adults are setting a bad example for kids. Research by Shields (2008) classified 29% of Canadian adults as frequent television watchers (15 or more hours per week) and 15% as frequent leisure-time computer users (11 hours or more per week). Recommendations by the Canadian Paediatric Society (2003), suggest that families limit television viewing to less than 1 to 2 hours per day.

When Canadians were asked how they get their physical activity, 43% said that they arrange family outings, organize activities, and limit TV and computer time. Lead by example and limit the amount of screen time that the entire family gets.

#### HAVE FUN WITH YOUR KIDS

Laughter can reduce your stress levels so aim to be positive and have fun while being active. Ask your family to make a list of Fun Things to Do. You might be surprised at what makes the list. Try adding lower cost activities such as gardening, bicycling, visiting the trails in your region, or cooking together. If you plan to cook together, take turns picking a healthy choice. This could be an opportunity to talk about what actually qualifies as a "healthy choice".

A lot of activity can be built into the day by walking to and from school, gardening, or doing other helpful activities. Have your children help with some of the chores. It not only builds activity into the day, but can give the whole family more free time to be healthy and active together.

Do you know how active  
the children in your life are?

## Canada's Physical Activity

### Guide recommends

**90 minutes of physical  
activity a day for children  
and youth.**

**I CHANGE**

The 2009 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, found that parents do not have a strong sense of the actual physical activity levels of their children. One regional study found that 88% of parents said their children were physically active, yet the results showed that 87% of their children were not meeting Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines.

## CHECK OUT A PARK

If you are concerned about letting your children go to a park for free play, join together with other neighbourhood parents and make a schedule to support each other and see that all the neighbourhood kids get out and play. Let the kids help plan and organize the activities.

## PUT THEM ON A TEAM

Organized sports are a great way to ensure that kids are getting active, having fun, and enjoying healthy competition at the same time. When parents were polled to see how they encourage their children to get active, researchers found that sports team involvement was the best way to get kids moving (Babcock, 2005).

Parents can also get involved by coaching, practicing with their kids, helping with fundraising, and most importantly, cheering their kids on.

Don't forget to take advantage of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit. This credit lets parents claim up to \$500 per year for eligible fitness expenses paid for each child who is under 16 years of age, at the beginning of the year in which the expenses are paid.

## GET INVOLVED

You can make a difference by volunteering. There is a need to advocate for quality playground equipment in parks and schools. It is also important that schools provide quality physical education programs and active extracurricular events. If these things are not happening in your child's school, find out why. If they are, let the principal and teachers know how much you support them.

## ACT NOW!

We all have a role to play in getting and keeping children healthy and active. Think about what you can do to encourage and support healthy active children in your community. After all, we all win when our children are healthy and well.

If you need help in reducing your family's screen time, check out this family activity planner:

[http://www.wehealthunit.org/family-health/parenting/handouts/Activity\\_planner.pdf/view](http://www.wehealthunit.org/family-health/parenting/handouts/Activity_planner.pdf/view).

## Visit all the nature trails in your region.



### KEY REFERENCES:

Active Healthy Kids Canada. (2009). *Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*. Retrieved June 18, 2009 from <http://www.activehealthykids.ca/ReportCard/2009ReportCardOverview.aspx>

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Shields, M., & Tremblay, M.S., (2008). Screen time among Canadian adults: A profile. (Catalogue No. 82-003). *Health Reports*, Vol.19, No. 2

