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Active kids are fit to learn.

active
healthy
kids
CANADA

The Active Healthy Kids Canada
Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

2009

F DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO STAND FOR FAILURE.

GET INSPIRED. GET MOVING.



Every year, the Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card examines physical activity opportunities for kids all across Canada. Leading the national Report Card research team is Chief Scientific Officer Mark Tremblay, Director of Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research with the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute. This year, the Report Card grade for physical activity levels is still, unfortunately, an F.

But research has shown that Canadian parents believe their kids get plenty of exercise—in a recent study, 88% of parents report that their children are active. In fact, only 13% of Canadian children and youth are meeting Canada’s recommended guidelines for daily physical activity. Canada’s Physical Activity Guide recommends 90 minutes of physical activity a day for children and youth.

Meeting the guidelines for optimal health and wellbeing is about making many small choices, every day, that add up to a healthy lifestyle. It’s really as easy as moving more! And at ParticipACTION, we’re here to help improve our grade by providing you with simple tips and strategies that will work for you and your family, and to prove that F doesn’t have to stand for failure.

FAMILY TIME IS FUN TIME

In a 2007 study, 60% of parents said they participate in family physical activity at least once a week, but only 27% of children agreed! The Report Card gives Family and Physical Activity a C+. Making physical activity part of your family fun time may just be the best way to get active together. Not surprisingly, parents who encourage physical activity have more active kids.

Our ParticipACTION tips:

- Try an active vacation destination, with a hiking trail or hotel pool nearby.
- Go for a family walk, bike ride, swim, karate lesson, learn to throw a Frisbee together or even challenge the neighbours to a baseball game.
- Don’t forget that raking, vacuuming and gardening count as physical activity.
- Teach your kids to make the active choice—avoid the escalator at the mall and the elevator in your apartment building as often as possible.

F CAN ALSO STAND FOR FITNESS, FUN AND FAMILY

BALANCE SCREEN TIME WITH ACTIVE TIME

Canadian children are spending way too much time in front of a television or computer screen—on average, four to six hours a day. The Report Card gives Screen Time a grade of F. Guidelines recommend that children and youth spend no more than two hours in front of a screen per day. For preschoolers, the recommendation is less than one hour.

Our ParticipACTION tips:

- Your kids are watching you, even when you’re watching TV! Remember to always role-model moderation.
- Remove TVs and computers from children’s bedrooms.
- Let your child choose two shows or computer games they can watch or play a day.
- “After-school” is a key timeslot for kids. School sports teams, active daycare, play dates with a neighbour and community programs all offer great after-school alternatives to screens.

SPORT PARTICIPATION IS PART OF THE EQUATION

For a nation of sports fans, it’s shocking to hear that Canada’s younger generations are participating less and less in sport. The Report Card gives Sport Participation a C. Studies show that enjoyment is the most important factor in maintaining physical activity participation, and when parents are engaged in volunteering to support kids’ sport pursuits, sport participation and physical activity levels are higher.

Our ParticipACTION tips:

- Encourage your child to get involved in sports teams or clubs at school.
- Volunteer to help out with your child’s team or club.
- Introduce your child to something different, like martial arts, synchronized swimming or fencing.
- Encourage neighbourhood outdoor games, like shooting hoops or soccer at the local park.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION MAKES ACTIVE PEOPLE

We all have busy lives, with many places to be. With all this movement, you’d think we’d all be active enough. But remarkably, the Report Card grade for Active Transportation is only a D. A recent study shows that children who actively commute to school get more daily physical activity, but only 10% of kids regularly walk or cycle to get places.

Our ParticipACTION tips:

- Make the time to walk your kids to school more often. If you can’t fit it into your schedule, try getting together with other parents to create a “Walking School Bus,” or trade off with a neighbour.
- Driving? Park two blocks away and walk the rest for 10 quick minutes of activity.
- Choose a daycare that walks your child to and from school.
- If you’re running errands or popping by the corner store, leave the car at home. Get a basket for your bicycle to make it easy to pick up groceries on two wheels.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION IS SMART

Across Canada, school policies, practices and facilities vary, but parents everywhere rely on their schools to help them raise healthy, active children. The Report Card gives Physical Education a grade of C-. Physical and Health Education Canada recommends that all students receive 30 minutes of P.E. every day. Physical activity actually helps improve academic grades, so we need to make sure children are getting consistent physical activity when they’re at school.

Our ParticipACTION tips:

- Tell your child’s principal and other parents that physical activity is a priority for you and not a “frill.”
- Advocate for P.E. classes and active opportunities offered every day.
- Make sure your child always brings his or her running shoes and is ready to be active at school.
- Pack your child’s backpack with a baseball glove or skipping rope so recess can be active time.

F CAN STAND FOR THE FUTURE

Every parent works hard to raise a healthy child. Unfortunately, childhood obesity has tripled from 3 to 9% over the past three decades. The health benefits of regular physical activity include a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, some types of cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, stress and anxiety. And research shows that getting your kids more active can actually help them in many areas of their lives.

At ParticipACTION, we believe active kids are:

- **Smart kids**

Physically active kids actually get better academic scores. If you want your child to do well at school, emphasize both hockey and homework.

- **Happy Kids**

Physically active kids have better mental health and reduced anxiety and depression.

- **Team Players**

Involvement in school sport and physical activity builds stronger attachment to school, and protects against bullying and other negative behaviours.

- **Better Learners**

Physical activity is a key strategy in supporting kids with developmental or learning differences like ADHD or ASD.

- **Thriving Kids**

Youth involved in sport and various physical activities are more likely to eat healthily and less likely to smoke, use drugs, engage in sexual activity, or feel bored or hopeless.

GET INSPIRED. GET MOVING.

ParticipACTION is the national voice of physical activity and sport participation in Canada. Through leadership in communications, capacity building and knowledge exchange, we inspire and support Canadians to move more.

Visit www.participACTION.com/inspiringkids for more tips on how to stay active!

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