

Lifestyle Tips



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School Based Physical Activity Interventions



Kids have tonnes of energy, but that doesn't always mean they're considered active—in fact, only 13% of children and youth are meeting the recommendations set out in Canada's Physical Activity Guides. Because children and youth spend so much of their time at school,

one logical place to get kids moving more is in the schools. There are a wide variety of school-based interventions to promote physical activity, but the ones that show the most promise use “whole school” or multi-component strategies. These approaches combine physical activity promotion in the classroom, through physical education, at recess and school events, and involve family and the community. You may worry that taking time away from math or science to do physical activity is ‘wasting’ much needed academic time. But research has shown that time away for physical activity doesn't negatively affect academic performance—physical activity, sport and comprehensive school health are actually related to enhanced learning, better concentration and overall academic readiness. As a parent, there are many ways that you can influence how much physical activity your child gets at school. Here are a few suggestions:

- Talk to your child's teachers and school principal about what physical activity your child receives. Let them know that physical activity is a priority for you and not a “frill.”
- Volunteer to help teachers run an inclusive intramural program, help with their walking/wheeling



events, lead a Walking School Bus or after-school physical activity.

- Encourage the school to implement Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) programs. QDPE is a well-planned school program of compulsory physical education provided for a minimum of 30 minutes each day to all students (Kindergarten to grade 12). QDPE is typically taught by qualified and



enthusiastic teachers and offered throughout the school year.

- Make sure your child always brings his or her running shoes and wears comfortable clothing to be active at school.
- Encourage the parent council to support physical activity in the school by helping to provide equipment, playground markings, resources and supporting professional development.
- Pack your child's backpack with a ball or skipping rope so recess can be active time.
- Encourage communication of information about physical activity to parents and families.
- Walk or bike with your child to and from school.

Schools play a key role in setting kids on the path to moving more, but they can't provide all that your child needs. Your child's physical activity can't end when school lets out. You can help by making physical activity part of your family fun time, too:

- Go for a family walk after dinner.
- Organize a neighbourhood game of baseball with your kids.
- Get your child to help out with chores around the house. Raking, vacuuming and gardening count as physical activity.



- Teach your kids to make the active choice. Take the stairs, instead of the escalator or the elevator, as often as possible.

Make sure your childcare arrangements consider physical activity, too. Ask your child's provider to limit screen time and offer active time for your kids, every day.

Finally, when thinking about how to get your kids active, don't forget to lead by example. Taking the time to be physically active yourself will send a powerful message to your kids—and help them grow into healthier, more active adults.

For more information on physical education for children and youth, please see the 2009 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card at www.activehealthykids.ca or visit Physical & Health Education Canada at www.phecanada.ca