



Kids CAN PLAY!

Encouraging children to be active at home, at school, and in their communities

Activity levels of children and youth in Alberta

Average Steps The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth (CANPLAY) study measures physical activity levels of children and youth by using pedometers to measure daily steps. Most of the analyses in this bulletin are based on combined data collected in year three and four (2007-2009) of data collection (unless otherwise stated).

During this time period, children and youth (between the ages of 5 and 19) in Alberta took an average of 11,600 steps; this is not significantly different from the national average. There has been no significant change in the average daily steps taken by children and youth overall in 2007-2009 compared to 2005-2007.

Compared to other regions across Canada, children and youth in Alberta take fewer steps than those in British Columbia and Yukon, but a similar number of steps to those in other provinces or territories.

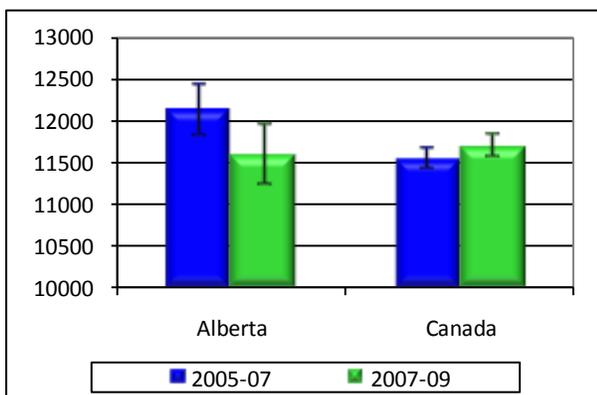
Child characteristics

Similar to national findings, children and youth living in Alberta take more steps if they are:

- younger children compared to older youth;
- boys compared to girls; and
- participants in organized physical activity and sport compared to those who are not.

FIGURE 1

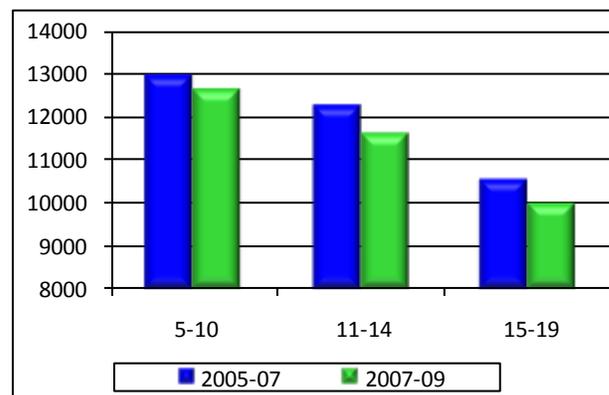
Average steps, overall, Alberta and Canada



CANPLAY 2005 - 2009, CFLRI

FIGURE 2

Average steps, by child age, Alberta



CANPLAY 2005 - 2009, CFLRI



Parent and household characteristics

At the national level, certain parental or household characteristics are associated with higher steps in children:

- University educated adults compared to those with a secondary level of education.
- More active parents compared to those who are less active (slightly) than their peers.

These relationships, however, are not significant among children and youth living in Alberta. In Alberta, children and youth from higher income households (\$100,000+) take more daily steps compared to those from lower income households (\$20,000-\$29,999).

How many steps are sufficient for children and youth to be healthy?

How many steps are required to be healthy? No definitive guidelines have been established regarding the number of steps required for health benefits for children and youth. However, several criteria have been suggested, and they are described below.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide (CPAG) for children and youth sets a goal that children add 90 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity to the incidental activities required by daily living, which translates roughly into 16,500 steps daily.^{1,2} When using this criterion, 89% of children and youth in 2007-09 living in Alberta do not accumulate enough daily steps associated with the guidelines. This proportion does not differ significantly from the national average. Within Alberta, the proportion not meeting this criterion has not changed significantly since 2005-07.

15,000 step criterion for children and youth is based on research that suggests 120 to 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity (here considered an equivalent of 15,000 steps) for both boys and girls is required for health.^{2,3} Using this criterion, 80% of children and youth in 2007-09 living in Alberta do not accumulate enough daily steps associated with the 15,000 criterion. This proportion does not differ

significantly from the national average and similarly, has not significantly changed within the province since 2005-07.

BMI-referenced criteria for children and youth, 12,000 steps daily for girls and 15,000 steps daily for boys, is based on research that suggests that these step counts are associated with a healthy body mass index (BMI) among 6 to 12 year-olds.⁴ Using these criteria, 67% of children and youth in Alberta do not accumulate enough daily steps. This proportion does not differ significantly from the national average. As with the other two criteria, the proportion in Alberta not meeting these criteria is similar to the rate in 2005-07.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of children and youth living in Alberta that are more likely not to meet each of the three criteria.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of children and youth who do not meet step criteria, Alberta

	CPAG criterion	15,000 step criterion	BMI-referenced criteria
Overall proportion	89%	80%	67%
Change from 2005-07	No change	No change	No change
Provincial comparisons	Similar to other provinces	Similar to other provinces	Fewer children in AB do not meet criteria compared to those in NB
Child characteristics	Girls more than boys	Girls more than boys Older youth more than younger children	Boys more than girls Older youth more than younger children
Parental and household characteristics	Unlike nationally, no relationship		

CANPLAY 2005 - 2009, CFLRI

References

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4. Tudor-Locke, C., Pangrazi, R.P., Corbin, C.B., Rutherford, W.J., Vincent, S.D., Raustorp, A., Tomson, L.M. & Cuddihy, T.F. (2004). BMI-referenced standards for recommended pedometer-determined steps/day in children. *Preventive Medicine*, 38, 857-864.

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