Behavioural trends indicate that participation in physical activity (PA) tends to decline with age. Recent research suggests that the steepest decline in PA occurs during the transition from late adolescence into early adulthood.¹ This research bulletin summarizes a study by Kwan et al. who conducted a longitudinal cohort study among a nationally representative cohort of Canadian adolescents to examine patterns of PA as individuals enter early adulthood.¹

In addition, to provide context with other health behaviours, the authors also examined patterns of smoking and binge drinking in this population.¹

Data from seven cycles of the National Population Health Survey (NPHS) were used (N=640; baseline age 12 – 15).¹ Participant interviews were conducted every two years from 1994 to 2007, and data was retained for those study participants who participated in at least three cycles.¹ Measures about PA, binge drinking, smoking, educational trajectory, and other demographic variables were collected.¹ Specifically, for PA total energy expenditure from leisure-time activities was estimated.¹ Study participants responded to questions about the type and duration of physical activities they participated in over the last three months.¹ This information together with the estimated relative intensity of each activity was used to calculate total daily energy expenditure (defined by MET scores).¹ Binge drinking was examined using the...
What have we learned?

• Physical activity declines with age and it is most prominent during transition into early adulthood.¹

• The decline in physical activity was most notable among men entering college/university.¹

• Smoking and binge drinking increases during adolescence, but begins to decrease or stabilised as participants matured — unlike physical activity, which continues to decline.¹

• Targeted physical activity interventions may help students maintain higher physical activity levels during their transition into early adulthood.²

References:
