

Lifestyle Tips



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Physical Literacy-The ABCs of Participation in Physical Activity and Sports

If you have school-aged children or follow the trends in education, you are most certainly familiar with the terms “literacy” and “numeracy”. Many school boards across Canada have prioritized literacy (one’s ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials in a variety of contexts) and numeracy (the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems and communicate about quantitative issues, reasoning and critical thinking skills) in order to succeed in all aspects of life and society.

But in order to truly succeed and engage in society, people have to be healthy - body, mind and spirit. And one of the most important ways we can be healthy is to be physically active. Being physically active for at least one hour a day for children and youth and 150 minutes a week for adults, will help keep us healthy by decreasing our risk for over twenty-five chronic diseases including heart disease, stroke, type II diabetes, and osteoporosis





Further there is growing evidence that regular activity helps decrease the risk for Alzheimer's disease and a number of other brain disorders. People who are active also experience less depression, anxiety, issues related to low self-esteem and stress. When you are active, you have more energy, can focus at work or school, fight common diseases such as flu and colds and enhance your social life!

Yet, despite these benefits, only five percent of kids and 15% of adults meet Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. In response, a growing area of research and program development is starting to focus on 'physical literacy'. The term 'physical literacy' essentially refers to a person's ability to move with confidence and competence in a wide variety of activities and in a number of different settings that benefit the healthy development of the whole person.

Physical education (PE) has long been recognized as an important part of the school curriculum providing children and youth with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to lead physically active lives - to become more physically literate. Sport and recreation programs are also focusing on enhancing participants' physical literacy.

But while the focus on the skills being taught are geared more toward sport participation and may lead to athlete development, they may not help keep us active through play, active transportation or in a recreational setting over the course of our lifetime.

As we continue to find ways to get and keep kids (and adults) more active, we have to ensure that the skills we teach lead to all forms of physical activity. Teaching children (and adults) to jump, run, hop, skip, dodge, throw, catch, kick, strike and balance is important to getting and keeping them active.

Further, learning to swim and being comfortable in water as well as being able to move on snow and ice are critical to being able to enjoy the many opportunities for developing healthy and well-rounded people with opportunities to fully engage in all aspects of life.

For more Lifestyle Tips, please visit: www.cflri.ca or participaction.com/get-informed/lifestyle-tips.