



## Setting the stage for a healthy childhood

### Raising an active child – 1 to 4 years

Young children love to move, play and explore. That's how they learn to master new skills such as running, hopping and climbing. Children will develop at their own pace. You are giving them the best start possible by giving them plenty of opportunity to play.



#### What does physical activity look like for your young child?

Physical activity in young children involves the use of large muscle groups (legs, body, shoulders and upper arms) in activities like walking, running, jumping and climbing. Your young child will alternate short bursts of activity with rest.

If given several opportunities each day for active play, these bursts of activity will add up. By 5 years of age your child should be able to play with more energy for longer periods of time and progress to an hour a day of energetic play.



#### How much activity does your young child need?

Toddlers and preschoolers should accumulate at least 3 hours of physical activity at **any intensity spread throughout the day.**

### Tips to get your young child moving

#### Mix it up! Involve your young child in many different activities

- ✓ Play with your child indoors and outdoors, on playgrounds, in nature, on snow and ice and in the rain.
- ✓ Practice throwing and catching a ball, balancing on a log, walking up and down stairs, jumping in puddles, and kicking a ball.
- ✓ Set aside time for both free play and organized activities.
- ✓ Dress for the weather. Provide your child with boots, rain jackets and warm layers to enjoy rainy and snowy days.
- ✓ Germs are passed on more easily in warm indoor spaces. Active play out in the fresh air is healthy.

#### Be active together

- ✓ Start an activity jar and fill it with your family's favourite activities like going for a nature walk, playing at the park or going swimming.
- ✓ Post schedules for your local recreation centre on the fridge.
- ✓ Schedule play dates with other families.
- ✓ Look for local play groups or recreation programs for parents and young children.
- ✓ Kids can usually start to participate in organized programs independently by age 3, but still find time to play together every day.

## Sit less and play more

Sedentary behaviour is the time spent inactive, or with very little body movements. Look for opportunities to replace inactivity with active play.

## Avoid screen time

Screen time, such as watching TV, playing video games or using computers, tablets or smartphones, is a type of sedentary behaviour.

To ensure plenty of time for active play, screen time should be limited to less than 1 hour per day for children 2 to 4 years old. Screen time is not recommended for children under 2 years of age.

Starting good screen habits early will make it easier to keep screen time under 2 hours a day when your child is 5 years and older.

## Tips to sit still less and avoid screens

### Make the most of the screen time they do get

- ✓ Choose age appropriate programs and talk to your children about what they are seeing and learning.
- ✓ Play games after the show that build on what they learned. For example, if the show talked about the colour blue, hunt for blue objects around the house.

### For more info and ideas:

Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines: [www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines)

To speak to a Qualified Exercise Professional for free, contact the Physical Activity Line at **1-877-725-1149**

## Be a role model and reduce screen time for the whole family

- ✓ Leave smartphones and tablets out of the main living area.
- ✓ Tell friends and family that you are trying to limit screen time and to call you rather than text.
- ✓ Use a timer to track screen time or give them a specific time to watch their favourite show.
- ✓ Plan to watch your favourite shows or use tablets or smartphones while your child is away or sleeping.
- ✓ Turn off all screens during family mealtimes and other family activities.
- ✓ Keep TVs and other screens out of your child's bedroom.

### Plan ahead!

- ✓ When going to a restaurant bring along favourite toys rather than giving your child a smartphone.
- ✓ Some days are busy; recognize when your child hasn't had an active day and plan for more activity the next day.



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*Give your child a healthy start by giving plenty of time for active play, encouraging a healthy relationship with food, and avoiding screen time and sugar sweetened drinks. Once children are 5 years old, a healthy goal is to Live 5-2-1-0 every day.*

**5** Enjoy-  
FIVE or more vegetables & fruits every day

**1** Play actively-  
at least ONE hour each day

**2** Power down-  
no more than TWO hours of screen time a day

**0** Choose healthy-  
ZERO sugar-sweetened drinks