



# Preschooler

## focus

### CANADIAN GUIDELINES FOR THE EARLY YEARS

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology and ParticipACTION have released the first Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (0-4 years). Find out how much activity your child should be getting.

#### Preschoolers should move more and sit less

From strong bones to a healthy heart, physical activity is important for the growth and development of children. However, how much activity young children need has not always been clear. Now for the first time, physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines for the *early years* are available in Canada. This age group includes infants (less than 1 year), toddlers (1-2 years) and preschoolers (3-4 years). A team of experts developed the guidelines using the best available scientific evidence. Members of the Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program at McMaster University helped lead the process.

The new Canadian guidelines suggest that preschool children:

- Get at least 3 hours of activity at any intensity spread throughout the day
- Limit prolonged sitting to no more than 1 hour at a time
- Limit screen time to less than 1 hour per day

Kids do not need to be continuously active for long periods. Their natural activity happens in short bursts and anything from dancing to climbing stairs counts! The goal is to help preschoolers gradually increase the intensity of their activity. By age 5, at least 1 of the 3 hours should be spent in energetic play.



### What Is Energetic Play?

Children are active any time they move around. As children grow older, the intensity of that activity becomes more important. *Energetic play* describes high intensity activities that use up more energy. Some examples include hopping, jumping, skipping, and bike riding. Organized sports like soccer practice or swimming lessons can create opportunities for energetic play. However, sports alone are not enough and should not replace free play.



Screen-based activities should be limited to less than 1 hour per day and are not recommended for children under 2 years of age

The Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years can be found online at: [www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines)



Learn about your preschooler's health and physical activity through a study conducted at McMaster University! Contact Nicole at [macHOPP@mcmaster.ca](mailto:macHOPP@mcmaster.ca) or (905) 521-2100 x.77217 or visit us online at [fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp](http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp)

## Benefits to Meeting the Guidelines

*The Canadian Pediatric Society supports the new Canadian guidelines. Being more active and less sedentary can help your child in more ways than one.*

Increasing physical activity levels and decreasing sedentary behaviour can help preschool children:

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Build a healthy heart
- Develop social skills
- Develop self-confidence
- Improve motor skills
- Improve learning and attention

Experts agree that the less time preschool children spend sitting or engaged in screen-based activities the better. Also, the recommended 3 hours of daily physical activity at any intensity is only a minimum. The more physical activity the greater the benefits!

## Tips to Help Your Child Meet the Guidelines

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology and ParticipACTION offer some tips on how you can help your child get moving:

- ✓ Organize play dates with other children
- ✓ Travel to your destination by walking or bike riding
- ✓ Turn on some music and learn action songs together
- ✓ Go outdoors and explore the environment
- ✓ Set limits and rules about screen time

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Active Healthy Kids Canada ([www.activehealthykids.ca](http://www.activehealthykids.ca))  
 Best Start Resource Centre ([www.beststart.org/haveaballtogether/campaign.html](http://www.beststart.org/haveaballtogether/campaign.html))  
 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute ([www.cflri.ca](http://www.cflri.ca))  
 Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology ([www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines))  
 Caring for Kids ([www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca))  
 McMaster University Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program ([fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp](http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp))  
 ParticipACTION ([www.participaction.com](http://www.participaction.com))

### References:

Tremblay, M. S. et al. (2012). Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years (aged 0-4 years). *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, 37: 345-356.  
 Tremblay, M. S. et al. (2012). Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (aged 0-4 years). *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, 37: 370-380.  
 Vale, S. et al. (2010). Compliance with physical activity guidelines in preschool children. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 28: 603-608.

## Did You Know?



Kids have a lot of energy, which is why we often think they get enough activity. Research tells us that kids actually spend about 80% of the time they are awake in sedentary behaviour (for example: sitting, colouring, watching television). As a parent or caregiver, it is important to help children break up their sedentary time with some physical activity. Any movement is better than none.