



Supporting Your Child's Physical Activity



It is alarming that children today expend four times less energy than 40 years ago and do 75 per cent less exercise than children in 1980. Some 60 per cent of Canadian children do not meet average fitness standards. Girls are especially under-active. Even at four years old, a girl spends an average of four hours a week less than a boy being physically active, already believing that boys are better at physical activities than they are.

Activity is an important part of children's physical, mental and emotional development. Providing opportunities for them to develop physical skills reaps benefits in every aspect of their development, for the rest of their life. A positive attitude towards active play at an early age positively affects their later involvement in physical activity and fitness.

10 Ways to Encourage Your Child to Be Physically Active

- 1 Be an active role model yourself.**
- Mom's participation in sport increased participation rates of her child by 22 percent.
 - Dad's participation in sport increased participation rates of his child by 11 per cent.

- 2 Provide everyday clothing for your child that encourages free movement and mobility.**
- Avoid fancy, frilly or stiff outfits or clothing your child has been told to "keep clean."
 - For your own sanity, provide clothing that is easy-care.

- 3 Photograph your child being active.**
- Enlarge the photo. Frame it. Hang it. Show your child you are proud of it!

- 4 Actively support your child's involvement in physical activity.**
- Buy good equipment.
 - Go and watch your child's games. Drive your child to and from practices. They are as important as games. Consider volunteering.
 - Your child's physical activity is a priority. Don't make a child sacrifice involvement in sport to babysit or do housework.

- 5 Take your child to the park and be active together.**
- Help your son and your daughter learn the fundamental skills of running, throwing, catching and kicking a ball.

- 6 Emphasize fun rather than competition and slimming attributes.**
- Encourage your child to try a variety of new activities, and help her learn the skills and acquire the equipment she needs to participate.
 - Avoid comments about your child's body size and shape. Love and support your child just the way s/he is.
 - Don't undermine a child's confidence and take the joy out of playing. Help your child to learn the skills needed to enjoy sport.

- 7 Introduce your child to active women.**
- All too often, women in sport are viewed as cheerleaders, water girls or chauffeurs. Both boys and girls need to be exposed to women who are athletes, coaches, officials and leaders in sport.
 - Buy sports books about women athletes. Watch women's sport events on TV with your child. Take your child to women's sport competitions in your community.
 - Read the sports pages with your child and follow the performances of Canada's great athletes such as Silken Laumann, Kate Pace, Angela Chalmers, Myriam Bedard, Ljiljana Ljubisic and Alison Sydor.

- 8 Plan active vacations or weekend excursions.**
- Try hiking, crosscountry skiing, rafting.

- 9 Avoid comments about what boys and girls should or should not do.**
- Make observations without making reference to gender. Avoid comments such as "you throw like a girl."
 - Behaviour guidelines are for all children.

- 10 Plan activities within your child's abilities so your child can achieve success.**
- Praise and encouragement will foster your child's self-esteem.