

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

KEY MESSAGES - Q & A

Key Messages

The new Guidelines are evidence-based. They are based on systematic reviews of the best available evidence following a rigorous and transparent scientific process.

Over a decade has passed since the first Guidelines were published. There have been significant advances in the science of physical activity and measurement since the mid-nineties prompting the need to update the Guidelines.

The new Guidelines are consistent with the over-arching message of the previous Canadian physical activity guidelines that in general “more is better” and the new guidelines should be viewed as a *minimal* target.

The new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines’ recommendations and age groupings are harmonized with the new U.S. and World Health Organization guidelines.

Questions & Answers

Why are new Guidelines needed?

There are several reasons to support the development of new, evidence-based Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines:

- There has been an explosion of new research in recent years
- The old guidelines were out-of-date
- There is evidence to support more specific recommendations
- Some age ranges missing with old guidelines
- There are more robust guideline development processes in place now
- The inactivity crisis deserves up-to-date guidelines

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Questions & Answers - cont'd

What is the difference between the old and new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines?

CHILDREN & YOUTH:

Inclusion of all school-aged children and youth.

Previously the age range was 6-14. The new guidelines are for children (5-11 years old) and youth (12-17 years old).

Recommendation for **60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per day.**

The best available evidence shows a clear dose-response relationship between the volume of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity and increased health benefits. The previous guidelines recommended a *progression* of physical activity, that children and youth should increase time currently spent on physical activity, starting with 30 minutes more per day and progressing over 5 months to 90 minutes more per day. Current evidence shows that substantial health benefits can be achieved with physical activity in excess of 60 minutes per day. This new evidence is reflected in the guidelines.

ADULTS:

Revised age range (18 to 64 years).

The new adult guidelines cover a larger age range. The previous guidelines focused on adults aged 20-55 years, the new guidelines include those aged 18-64 years.

Recommendation for **150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week.**

Evidence shows a clear relationship between increased levels and intensities of physical activity and increased health benefits, but it is unclear the best frequency of physical activity (e.g. if this activity needs to be done daily, or every other day for maximum effect). However, the guideline states that the activity must be accumulated in a minimum of 10-minute bouts, and this provides health promotion experts with flexibility in communicating recommendations for activity frequency. This new guideline also has the advantage of allowing individuals to customize their weekly physical activity routine to their schedule.

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OLDER ADULTS:

Revision of age range (65 years and older).

The new guidelines for older adults include people 65 years of age and older to reflect the best available evidence, whereas previous guidelines focused on ≥ 55 years of age.

Recommendation for **150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week.**

As with the adult guidelines, evidence shows that increased physical activity (at moderate to vigorous intensities) is associated with increased health benefits, but it is unclear the best frequency of physical activity (e.g., if this activity needs to be done daily, or every other day for best effect). However, the guideline states that the activity must be accumulated in a minimum of 10-minute bouts, and this provides health promotion experts with flexibility in communicating recommendations for activity frequency. This new guideline also has the advantage of allowing individuals to customize their weekly physical activity routine to their schedule.

Who is releasing the Guidelines?

The research to update Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines was funded by numerous partners including the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), CIHR, Health Canada, and the in-kind contributions of the research scientists' university laboratories. From this research, CSEP developed the first draft of the new guidelines. Extensive stakeholder consultations (conducted by both CSEP and PHAC) followed, resulting in the final version of the physical activity guidelines being developed by CSEP, with input and support from PHAC and ParticipACTION. ParticipACTION is the national leader in the communication of the importance of physical activity; therefore, they are lending their voice to help communicate the guidelines clearly and concisely to all Canadian citizens.

Where can we get the new physical activity guidelines?

The new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines can be found on CSEP's website at www.csep.ca. CSEP created these comprehensive, but easy-to-understand guidelines to help Canadians achieve the daily physical activity required to live a healthy, active life. CSEP is also working to ensure the information is broadly communicated among stakeholders and within the research community.



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Questions & Answers - cont'd

When will there be tear-away sheets and booklets with the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines available for Health Units to order for the public?

There is currently no date set for the release of updated *Canada's Physical Activity Guides* or their equivalent. The CSEP, Public Health Agency of Canada and others will be working together to meet the broad public interest by updating and creating easy-to-use materials that reflect the latest guidelines.

What should I do with my old Guides and Handbooks?

The outdated *Canada's Physical Activity Guides* will be removed from the Public Health Agency of Canada website and distribution centre. PHAC supports the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and will put up links to the new Guidelines on the CSEP website csep.ca/guidelines and to the information and tools for Canadians and stakeholders at ParticipACTION.com. There will be a transition period for a time when both the old and new materials will be in circulation.

What is the role of physical activity promoters in supporting the release of the new PA guidelines? Will CSEP, PHAC, or ParticipACTION be providing tools for health and physical activity promoters to use locally?

The CSEP, with the assistance of ParticipACTION, has prepared materials to support the launch, including a media release, background information, Q&A, and sample article. Some of these materials will be available at launch date, others will follow shortly after. CSEP is interested in collaborating with partners to maximize the dissemination of the new Guidelines to Canadians. All three websites for CSEP, ParticipACTION and PHAC will link to information associated with the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

How do the new Guidelines translate to step counts?

This information is not yet available. The CSEP research to update the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines did not examine the number of step counts required to meet the guidelines.



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What about surveillance and monitoring? How do the new Guideline thresholds relate to data collected based on the previous Guidelines?

There is no simple response. Very recent studies have been using the new Guidelines to report their results i.e., 2007-2009 CHMS Accelerometer Results (Colley et al., 2011) and the 2010 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card (AHKC, 2010). Older data may need to be re-analyzed. However, the utility of the results is limited given the fact that we know much of it is self-reported, thus difficult to verify. The good news is, that with increasing frequency, direct objective measures are being utilized to collect data as pedometers and accelerometers replace self-reports. Further, this data will be more easily compared across jurisdictions with which the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines are harmonized e.g., US, UK, WHO and Australia so that Canadians can see how they measure up.

What about Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines?

CSEP scientists are currently doing research in this very important area and will communicate what the science shows as soon as the information is available. Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children (5-11) and Youth (12-17) are expected to be the first guidelines released.

What about Guidelines for Children under 5 years old?

Currently, there are no Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for children under five, and this new set of guidelines does not specifically address this age group. Work is currently underway in the physical activity research community in Canada to develop official physical activity and sedentary activity guidelines that address this age group.