

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

2012 SCIENTIFIC STATEMENTS

FOR THE EARLY YEARS - 0 - 4 YEARS

Preamble

These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy infants (aged less than 1 year), toddlers (aged 1-2 years) and preschoolers (aged 3-4 years), irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status of the family. Parents and caregivers should encourage infants, toddlers and preschoolers to participate in a variety of physical activities that support their healthy growth and development, are age-appropriate, enjoyable and safe and occur in the context of family, child care, school and community.

Infants should be physically active daily as a part of supervised indoor and outdoor experiences. Activities could include tummy time, reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling, and crawling.

Children in the early years should be physically active daily as part of play, games, sports, transportation, recreation and physical education. For those who are physically inactive, increasing daily activity towards the recommended levels can provide some health benefits.

Following these physical activity guidelines may improve motor skills, body composition, and aspects of metabolic health and social development. These potential benefits far exceed the potential risks associated with physical activity.

These guidelines may be appropriate for infants, toddlers and preschoolers with a disability or medical condition; however, their parents or caregiver should consult a health professional to understand the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them.

This recommendation places a high value on the advantages and benefits of physical activity that accrue throughout life. It also takes into consideration the preferences of practitioners to have guidance in this area for young children and the importance of setting targets for surveillance. Expert opinion and other international guidelines were used to complement the evidence upon which these guidelines were developed.

For guidance on decreasing sedentary behaviour, please refer to the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (www.csep.ca/guidelines).

Guidelines

For healthy growth and development:

- Infants (aged less than 1 year) should be physically active several times daily – particularly through interactive floor-based play.
- Toddlers (aged 1-2 years) and preschoolers (aged 3-4 years) should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity at any intensity spread throughout the day, including
 - A variety of activities in different environments.
 - Activities that develop movement skills.
 - Progression toward at least 60 minutes of energetic play by 5 years of age.
- More daily physical activity provides greater benefits.