

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

BACKGROUND INFO

Background Information

Over the past several decades, scientific evidence has shown that levels of physical activity and fitness of Canadians has dropped dramatically and the number of Canadians considered overweight or obese has steadily increased. There has also been a steady increase of diseases associated with overweight and obesity such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. Participating in regular physical activity is an effective way to prevent the development of many health risks. This is true across all age, gender, ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups.

Since 1995, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) have worked together on the development of Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines to promote healthy active living in the Canadian population. This background report outlines the steps taken to arrive at the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children (5-11 years) and Youth (12-17 years), Adults (18-64 years), and Older Adults (65 years and older). These guidelines are presented by CSEP and made available to all Canadians.

Development of Guideline Recommendations

New Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines are informed by a rigorous scientific process. A detailed report outlining this process can be found on the CSEP website (<http://www.csep.ca/guidelines>). The complete timeline for the process can be found below. The final steps to develop the wording for the new guidelines occurred in four steps.

1. KEY EVIDENCE

In May 2010, key evidence to inform the new Physical Activity Guidelines was published. This evidence came from a scientific review of current knowledge on the relationship between physical activity and health in children and youth (5-17 years), adults (18-64 years), and older adults (≥ 65 years).

2. DRAFT GUIDLINES

In September 2010, a consensus meeting was convened to discuss the scientific evidence and draft the wording for the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

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3. STAKEHOLDER REVIEW

In September-October 2010, draft guidelines were sent out to a wide range of stakeholders for online consultation. Well over 1000 national and international content experts, health professionals, governmental and non-governmental organizations, teachers, and caregivers provided responses. Overall, the majority of respondents “completely agreed” with the proposed preamble and guideline for all age groups.

The Public Health Agency of Canada also held a series of in-person consultations across the country. The majority of those participating in the consultation meetings felt comfortable with the process used to develop the new Physical Activity Guidelines,

4. FINALIZATION OF GUIDELINES

In November 2010, the CSEP re-convened to address the concerns and comments brought up through the stakeholder consultations and to adjust the guidelines accordingly. Final guidelines for each age group are presented below.

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CHILDREN (5-11 years) and YOUTH (12-17 years)

These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy children (5-11 years) and youth (12-17 years), irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status of the family. Children and youth are encouraged to participate in a variety of physical activities that support their natural development and are enjoyable and safe.

- For health benefits, children aged 5-11 years and youth aged 12-17 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. This should include:
 - Vigorous-intensity activities at least 3 days per week.
 - Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week.
- More daily physical activity provides greater health benefits.

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ADULTS (18-64 years)

These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy adults aged 18-64 years, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Adults are encouraged to participate in a variety of physical activities that are enjoyable and safe.

- To achieve health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.
- It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.
- More physical activity provides greater health benefits.

OLDER ADULTS (65 years and older)

These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy adults aged 65 years and older, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Older adults are encouraged to participate in a variety of physical activities that are enjoyable and safe.

- To achieve health benefits and improve functional abilities, adults aged 65 years and older should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.
- It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.
- Those with poor mobility should perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls.
- More physical activity provides greater health benefits.

Changes from Previous Guidelines

CHILDREN (5-11 years) and YOUTH (12-17 years)

Inclusion of all school-aged children and youth.

The new guidelines focus on a wider age group for the pediatric population. Whereas the previous guidelines focused on children (6-9 years) and youth (10-14 years), the new guidelines have

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expanded to capture all school-aged children and youth (5-17 years). This also reflects current research which often takes place in the school setting, therefore setting pre-determined age limits.

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

The most current evidence available shows a clear dose-response relationship between moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity and increased health benefits. In other words, as time and intensity of physical activity are increased, so does the associated health benefits. The greatest health benefits occur with an average of 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per day.

Previous guidelines were not able to give a specific time needed to achieve health benefits and recommended that children and youth should “increase time currently spent on physical activity, starting with 30 minutes more per day” and progress over 5 months to 90 minutes more per day. New evidence has emerged and we’re now able to specify the amount of physical activity needed. Therefore, new guidelines have changed to reflect new evidence.

Emerging recommendations for sedentary behaviours.

The final change from previous guidelines is the omission of recommendations for time spent engaging in sedentary behaviours. Work to provide Canadian guidelines specifically for sedentary behaviour for school aged children and youth (5-17 years) was completed concurrently with, and following a similar process to, the physical activity guidelines.

ADULTS (18-64 years)

Revised age range (18 to 64 years).

The new adult guidelines include a wider population by age. Whereas the previous guidelines focused on adults 20-55 years of age, the new guidelines included those from 18 to 64 years. This change was made to reflect the best available evidence and to harmonize guidelines with other countries and organizations.

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

Evidence clearly supports the dose-response relationship between increased physical activity and health benefits, but it is unclear if this activity needs to be done daily, or every other day

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for maximum effect. While previous guidelines recommended “60 minutes of physical activity everyday to stay healthy and improve your health”, we updated the guideline recommendations to reflect current evidence. The change from a daily reference to a weekly reference reflects the aggregated evidence more precisely. Recommendation for weekly physical activity also carries the inherent advantage of being flexible, allowing a variety of individual approaches to meet the recommendation. Authors stress that additional physical activity is associated with increased health benefits.

OLDER ADULTS (65 years and older)

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 those ≥ 55 years of age.

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

As with the adult literature, evidence clearly supports the dose-response relationship between increased physical activity and health benefits in older adults and also benefits related to functional independence. The new recommendations emphasize physical activities that are at minimum, moderate intensity, with greater benefit and less volume required when vigorous intensity activities are incorporated. The moderate- to vigorous-intensity is supported by the studies of older adults with “functional” outcomes.

For the important functional outcomes related to fitness, physical activity sessions 3 or more times a week are effective without a requirement of daily activity. While previous guidelines recommended “60 minutes of physical activity everyday to stay healthy and improve your health”, we updated the guideline recommendations to reflect current evidence. Recommendation for weekly physical activity also carries the inherent advantage of being flexible, allowing a variety of individual approaches to meet the recommendation. Authors stress that additional physical activity is associated with increased health benefits.

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Dissemination and Implementation

Partner organizations (e.g., CSEP, ParticipACTION, PHAC, Active Healthy Kids Canada) are working to disseminate and implement these guidelines within the general public. This information will be made available on the CSEP website (www.csep.ca). The primary resource will be information sheets for all age groups (i.e. what the guidelines are, health benefits of achieving guidelines and examples of ways to meet the guidelines). Additional resources will be made available as soon as possible and will reflect preliminary feedback from stakeholders.

ORIGINAL GUIDELINES: Adults (1998), Older Adults (1999), Children (2002), and Youth (2002)
MOST RECENT LITERATURE SEARCH: May 2008
GUIDELINE RELEASE DATE: January 24th, 2011

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