

# Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

## KEY MESSAGES - Q & A

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The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children (aged 5-11 years) and Youth (aged 12-17 years) represent the first systematic evidence-based sedentary behaviour guidelines in the world. Their development followed a rigorous and transparent scientific process using a systematic review of the best available evidence, similar to the process used to develop the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines are intended to address the 23 hours of the day that children and youth may not be engaged in physical activity.

These guidelines are presented alongside the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children and Youth and are designed to help children and youth live healthy, active lives. They are meant to help encourage Canadians to limit the time they spend watching TV, playing video and computer games, and other sedentary behaviours.

### Questions & Answers

What is 'sedentary behaviour'?

Sedentary behaviour is a distinct class of behaviours characterized by little physical movement and low energy expenditure. Some examples include:

- watching TV
- playing passive video games
- using the computer
- prolonged sitting (e.g. at a desk)
- motorized transportation

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### Questions & Answers - cont'd

#### What are Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines?

Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines provide recommendations for the amount of time that Canadian children and youth should spend in sedentary pursuits in order to minimize health risks.

#### Why did the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) do this research?

Over the past several decades, the physical activity and fitness level of Canadians has decreased. Participating in regular physical activity can provide a variety of health benefits across all age, gender, ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups. However, only 7% of children and youth are active enough to meet current Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. Research shows that Canadian children and youth are spending an average of 8.6 hours per day, or 62% of their waking hours, being sedentary. Similar trends are being reported in the U.S. where children and youth spend an average of 6-8 hours per day being sedentary. New research has shown that this sedentary behaviour is associated with increased health risk, even if physical activity guidelines are met.

#### Why is this research important?

Healthy, active living requires a lifestyle approach. It is important that we consider what Canadians are doing (or not doing) during the whole day. Scientific evidence shows that increased sedentary time is associated with increased risk for overweight or obesity, decreased fitness, decreased self-esteem, decreased academic performance, and increased aggression.

#### Why do we need sedentary behaviour guidelines?

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines have been developed to encourage children and youth to accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. However, even if children and youth meet these guidelines, there are still 23 hours remaining in the day for school, sleep, work and discretionary or 'free' time. Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines target this free time in particular, and are meant to encourage incidental movement and active play and discourage prolonged periods of sitting at a computer or resting on the sofa watching TV



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### Questions & Answers - cont'd

Why are there only sedentary guidelines for children and youth?

The development of these guidelines has followed a rigorous scientific process. Due to the immense amount of work required to inform the guidelines, it may take some time to develop guidelines for all age groups.

What about other age groups?

Developing Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Young Children (0-4 years), Adults (18-64 years) and Older Adults ( $\geq 65$  years) is of immediate concern. The CSEP recommends that this work be done as soon as resources are available.

How do the Physical Activity Guidelines and the Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines fit together?

Once complete, CSEP and ParticiP ACTION will work together to integrate the Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines with the new Physical Activity Guidelines to ensure that they are easy to access for all Canadians.

Who is releasing the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines?

The CSEP and the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute (HALO-CHEO) developed the evidence-based Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines. ParticiP ACTION is partnering with CSEP and HALO-CHEO and other partners to disseminate this information to all Canadians.



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### Questions & Answers - cont'd

Does the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) endorse the Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines?

PHAC remains supportive of all ongoing science- and evidence-based knowledge development that organizations like CSEP continue to pursue, and CSEP is recognized for helping advance the shared agenda.

What can we do to decrease sedentary time?

Reducing sedentary time can be easy. The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines' Information Sheets offer tips and suggestions to sit less and move more, and further information can be consulted on the CSEP website at [csep.ca/guidelines](http://csep.ca/guidelines) or the ParticipACTION website: [participACTION.com](http://participACTION.com).

Cutting down on sitting down. Help children swap sedentary time with active time!

