



## Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviours

Physical activity means any movement performed by the body's muscles. This forces your body to work, as it must use up energy to move. Physical activity ranges from vigorous activities, such as jogging or bicycling, to non-vigorous activities such as walking and gardening.

Physical activity improves health. Many diseases, such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, obesity and osteoporosis, can be caused or made worse by not getting enough physical activity. Being physically active reduces stress, strengthens the heart and lungs, increases energy levels, helps you maintain and achieve a healthy body weight and can improve your outlook on life.

Until recently, there were no universally accepted guidelines for physical activity in preschool-aged children. In March 2012, The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology released the first Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years (aged 0–4 years). It also released the first Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (aged 0–4 years).

Sedentary behaviour means time spent not moving your body. When a body is not active, it is not exercising its muscles and not using very much energy.

Although it has been generally assumed that young children are very active on their own, research has shown this is not correct. Many preschool aged children spend too much time being inactive. Sedentary behaviour can negatively impact a child's physical and mental development and may be associated with increased body fat. Some examples of inactivity are light-activity play, watching television, computer gaming or playing video games. Television, computer and video games are often referred to as screen time.

Recommendations from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology say that television viewing should be limited to one hour per day or less for preschoolers. Children two years and younger should not be exposed to any screen time.

Young children should be physically active daily as part of play, games, sports, transportation, recreation and physical education.

*Adapted from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Active Healthy Kids Canada (2012)*