

Lifestyle Tips



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Active Play



Active play may be fun, but it's certainly not frivolous. Play allows children and youth of all ages to try new things, test boundaries, use their imaginations and, perhaps most importantly, enjoy being active. It has also been shown to foster and improve motor function, creativity,

decision-making, problem solving and social skills. And, it's lots of fun!

Unfortunately, the 2012 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card tells us that play is on the decline in Canada, and that Canadian kids are not playing actively in their "free time" after school and on weekends. Here are some recommendations for increasing opportunities for active play:

Early years

Provide access to safe, open areas, either indoors or outdoors, where kids can move freely. Add balls and toys that encourage more vigorous play at home, and in childcare and community settings. And, make an effort to get down on the floor and play with them!



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School-age children

Provide access to playgrounds, nature, skipping ropes, balls and equipment to facilitate active play. To counter safety concerns, parents and caregivers can take turns supervising kids at play in the park or on the block, encourage kids to play outside with a buddy and consider street-proofing courses.

Youth

Increase youth-friendly play spaces, such as playing fields or outdoor gyms where youth can hang out and direct their own activities. Tweens and teens need free time to play, let loose and enjoy each other's company.

Kids of all ages

- Extracurricular activities and structured sports can be a great part of an active life. But if your child has no free time, consider reducing the number of scheduled activities to give more time for play.
- Research shows that many parents restrict their children's outdoor play because of safety concerns. To increase neighbourhood safety, advocate for traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps and roundabouts, which have

been shown to decrease pedestrian-vehicle accidents.

- To reduce screen time, encourage daily time spent outdoors, instead of in front of the television or video games.

Active play is good for kids, and most of all, they enjoy it! Passive pursuits like television watching and video games may pull them towards the couch, but once they get going, most kids are happy to be out playing actively.

For more information on supporting and encouraging active play, please visit ParticipACTION Tips.

