

ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS CANADA'S **POSITION ON ACTIVE VIDEO GAMES**



ACTIVE HEALTHY KIDS CANADA DOES NOT RECOMMEND ACTIVE VIDEO GAMES AS A STRATEGY TO HELP KIDS BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE.

Context

As the lure of technology rises and physical activity levels of kids fall, active video games—also called exergames—are often presented as a possible solution to getting kids to move more. There have been high hopes for the games since they came on the market, but are active video games effective at getting kids more active? Are they a good strategy to get kids closer to the 60 minutes of activity they need every day according to the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines? In 2012, Active Healthy Kids Canada set out to answer these questions by convening an international panel of researchers for a comprehensive look at all the evidence on the subject. The result is our official position on active video games.

POSITION

Active Healthy Kids Canada **DOES NOT** recommend active video games as a strategy to help kids be more physically active.

EXPLANATION

- Playing active video games doesn't lead to increased overall daily physical activity levels.
- Active video games may get heart rates up, but they're not significantly helping kids get to the 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity required each day.
- Kids find active video games appealing, but the appeal wears off over time and many don't stick with them
- Active video games don't offer the fresh air, vitamin D, connection with nature and social interactions that come with outdoor active play.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Active video games are a good way to break up sedentary time, like sitting on the couch, but not as good as playing real active games or sports.
- Enjoy playing active video games with your kids, and let them enjoy playing them with their friends, but don't misunderstand this as a replacement of real physical activity.
- If money is spent on active video games as a means of exercise, it might be better spent on skipping ropes, balls, ice skates or other sporting equipment.
- In kids with developmental delays, movement challenges or injuries, active video games can be used to help teach motor skills, improve movement and rehabilitate.

BACKGROUND

As a trusted source of information on the inactivity issue, Active Healthy Kids Canada produces the most comprehensive annual report on child and youth physical activity in Canada – the Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card. In response to multiple queries for expert opinion on active video games, Active Healthy Kids Canada undertook a rigorous and transparent scientific process to develop this position, convening a panel of international researchers to conduct a systematic review of the best available scientific evidence, examining 1367 published papers. This research and the process that was undertaken to develop the research have both been submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Active Healthy Kids Canada acknowledges its strategic research partner, the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute and ParticipACTION, its strategic communications partner, for their contributions to the development and dissemination of this position.

For more information and additional tools, please go to www.activehealthykids.ca