

My preschooler is active enough - why do I need to worry about physical activity?



Many parents feel that their preschooler is active enough and may even have trouble slowing them down. While it's true that preschoolers are naturally active it's important for parents and caregivers to support and encourage this natural tendency. Presently, there is growing concern that inactivity and poor eating habits in older children and youth are leading to an epidemic in childhood obesity. The early childhood years are the ideal time to help children develop positive lifestyle attitudes and behaviours around healthy eating and active living which they can carry on to their later years.

Your preschooler might be active now but...

- Over half of Canadian children are NOT active enough for optimal growth and development.
- Children become less active as they get older.
- Children have less time for active play when they are in school.
- Girls tend to become less active than boys as they get older.

Physical activity is important for all children including toddlers and preschoolers for healthy growth and development. Physical activity is also important for young children to:

- build strong bones and muscles
- stay flexible
- have a healthy weight
- have good posture and balance
- help improve fitness and strengthen their heart
- build confidence and to help them feel good about themselves
- reduce stress and help them sleep

Inactivity in childhood leads to...

- Increased risk of unnecessary weight gain and obesity.
- Increased risk of heart and bone disease and some cancers later in life.
- Increased risk of adult onset or type 2 diabetes (which has been observed in children with marked obesity).

Being active is fun, healthy and normal!

- Preschoolers are naturally active. Support their natural tendency to be active by encouraging them to be active every day.
- Be active with your child. Help your child learn basic skills such as throwing, catching, jumping and climbing. Play a game, dance, walk, swim, cycle, skate or just have a ball!
- Encourage more outdoor play and activities. Let them run, jump, hop, skip and climb.
- Build healthy habits such as keeping active and eating well, which will last a lifetime.

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