

## After school – time to get active!

Children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily to live healthier, happier lives. Most children spend their after school time sitting and playing video or computer games, watching television or reading. Try these tips to get your kids active after school:

- Get outside with your kids
- Use active modes of travel such as walking and cycling as much as possible
- Reduce television viewing and video/computer games and get out and play!
- Encourage children to participate in sports or intramural activities after school
- Research available programs from your local Parks and Recreation Department
- Help children find activities that they enjoy and suit their abilities



For more information on physical activity visit [www.playbrucegrey.com](http://www.playbrucegrey.com)

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## Dress for winter play

In Canada, it's cold from December to March. Here are some tips to keep your children warm and comfortable at school:

- Dress children in three layers – an inner layer to keep moisture away from skin; a middle layer to retain body heat; and an outer wind-breaking layer
- Let children put on their own outerwear at home so they know how to do so at school too
- Pack extra dry clothes such as socks, mitts and pants, and remind children to change as soon as they get their clothing wet
- Have them wear a hat that covers their ears and head
- Try a neck warmer without loose ends that covers their chin and face
- Have them wear mitts instead of gloves; mitts help keep their fingers together and warm
- Have them wear boots that are roomy enough for wool socks and their toes
- Stay active in the cold – make snow angels and build snow castles to keep warm



Children dressed for the weather are always ready to play with other children at school and feel included. Taking breaks outside the classroom helps children learn, be attentive and focus.

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## Get active with a family scavenger hunt

### Looking for a fun family outing?

Try an active family scavenger hunt on a local trail. Design your scavenger hunt by listing items for everyone to find while hiking on the trail. You can have a competition or make it just for fun.

### Here are a few ideas for your list:

- Find a seed pod, woodpecker hole, dead log, oak leaf, pine cone, good home for a squirrel, fern that's longer than your arm, tree that's too big to wrap your arms around, or a tree that you think is younger than you
- Find something smooth, scratchy, round, that an insect has eaten, that flies, that is rotting, that would be good food for a deer, that crawls or that would be good food for a mouse
- Look for three different colours not including green and brown, or your favourite thing



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## Give the gift of physical activity

When choosing gifts this season, consider items that can have a lasting impact on the health of your children. Consider gifts to enjoy over and over again such as:

**Sports equipment** Think skipping rope, football, soccer ball, baseball glove and bat, skateboard, skates, hockey net, basketball net, sports helmet, bicycle, toboggan or snowshoes

**Active clothes** Think t-shirt, track suit, swimsuit, ski suit, knee and elbow pads, hat, scarf and waterproof mitts, sport jersey, running shoes, warm winter boots, water shoes, reflective clothing or a water bottle

**Activities** Swim, dance, aerobics, sports, parks and recreation programs or a day pass to an indoor or outdoor playground (such as rock climbing facility, a waterpark, a bike or scooter park or a trampoline park)



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## Help your kids take a break from screen time

Taking a break from screens (computer, television, video and handheld devices) can be a challenge, but sitting for several hours a day can put children at risk for preventable health problems including type 2 diabetes, obesity and heart disease. Recreational screen time for children should be limited to less than two hours per day.



Tips for parents:

- Talk with your kids about screen time limits and stay committed to your agreement
- Time all screen use. No more than two hours of total screen time a day is recommended for children ages 5 to 11.
- Consider no or less screen time rules during the school week and at meal times
- Look at times of the day when your family can do something active together
- Look for more tips at [mediasmarts.ca](http://mediasmarts.ca)

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## Unstructured outdoor play

Active outdoor play in nature is essential for healthy child development. It allows children to be physically active, solve problems, learn their own limits and develop confidence.

- Dress for outdoor play – rain boots to jump in puddles, warm outerwear to play in snow, clothes/shoes that might get grass or mud on them. Wear sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses and clothing to cover skin
- Encourage children to be curious and explore using all their senses
  - Sight: Play games such as I spy, nature scavenger hunt or counting and colors
  - Sound: Listen to the rustling leaves or the rhythm of the rain
  - Touch: Explore using touch; compare uneven tree bark to smooth stones
- Arrange a play date in the backyard or at the park away from electronic devices
- Allow children to be imaginative, turning outdoor spaces into castles or ships
- Keep a safe distance and close eye on children while encouraging them to be curious and explore
- Pack healthy snacks and water to keep everyone energized



Ask children how they felt before going outdoors and after. Do they feel more relaxed after playing outdoors? Help children identify when their body and mind are telling them to take a break, recover and restore their attention. For more information on the benefits of play in nature and outdoors visit [https://www.participaction.com/sites/default/files/downloads/Participaction-PositionStatement-ActiveOutdoorPlay\\_0.pdf](https://www.participaction.com/sites/default/files/downloads/Participaction-PositionStatement-ActiveOutdoorPlay_0.pdf)

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## Want an active child? Be an active parent.

Parents who are physically active are more likely to have active children. Children watch and learn much more from what you do than from what you say. Parents are children's number one role models.

It is time to get up and get active with your children!

Some tips:

- Go for a daily walk, jog or bike ride around the neighbourhood
- Learn a new sport together such as tennis or basketball
- Play with your children; enjoy a game of hopscotch, skipping, tag or catch
- Leave the car at home and use active transportation (such as cycling, walking, rollerblading) as often as possible
- Limit screen time to no more than two hours of leisure screen time per day for school-aged children
- Have children help with chores around the house; have them rake leaves, vacuum, walk the dog or carry groceries

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## Have your kids played today?

Remember the days when children would rush out the door to play with friends or explore the neighbourhood and return home only for meals or when the streetlights came on? Childhood today looks very different, with more time spent supervised indoors, in structured activities, in front of screens and with little allowance for outdoor play time and risk taking.

Children need more active, outdoor play. Active play is unstructured, child-led, often spontaneous physical activity. It can happen alone, with friends, or with family and it usually happens outdoors. Active play is important for a child's health, growth and development.

Active play can include such things as heights (such as climbing a tree); speed (like going for a bike ride or sledding); use of tools (such as building a fort); elements of nature (like playing near water); rough and tumble play (like wrestling or playing tag); and disappearing (such as exploring the woods).

### How can you encourage active play?

- Balance scheduled activities with free play time
- Encourage children to play in natural outdoor spaces and in a variety of weather conditions
- Encourage children to drink plenty of water when they are playing outdoors. Do not forget sun safety when outdoors – children should wear a bucket hat, cover up, play in the shade, put on sunscreen, and wear sunglasses
- Allow children to take risks so that they can have fun while learning to identify and manage risks in all areas of their lives



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## Learning to move is just as important as learning to read or write

The development of basic movement skills, such as running, throwing, catching and jumping, is important for children to successfully participate in sports and physical activities. Children who develop these basic movement skills are said to be physically literate.

How do you know if your child is physically literate? Does your child:

1. Show an interest in being active and demonstrate confidence in his or her abilities?
2. Have basic movement skills? For example, can he or she:

- catch
- jump
- run
- swim
- throw
- climb
- skip
- roll
- balance
- kick
- dribble
- strike



3. Understand the importance of being active and how to be safe while being active?
4. Take responsibility for being active on a regular basis?

Children who learn basic movement skills find it easier to join and socialize with others in playground games and are more likely to be active and maintain a healthy body weight.

### What can parents do to help build physical literacy?

- Spend time with your children in activities they enjoy and teach them basic movement skills
- Encourage outdoor active play to practice movement skills
- Encourage children to take part in a variety of sports and activities rather than specializing in one sport early
- Avoid competitive sports until your child has learned fundamental movement skills so that her or she will have the confidence and skills needed to succeed
- Choose programs that include the development of basic movement skills
- Make sure your child is active for at least 60 minutes a day

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