

Physical Activity

June is here and the school year is soon coming to an end. In the next few weeks, children and youth will have a lot more free time on their hands. This is an excellent time to encourage your children to get off the couch, away from the computer or video game and get outside and get active.

The new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that, for health benefits, children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity daily, such as riding bike, swimming, or playing at the playground. In Newfoundland and Labrador, children and youth are falling well behind the national average in achieving this level of activity. According to the 2011 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, children in this province have some of the lowest rates of physical activity in the country. In fact, only 1 in 4 kids are reaching even the minimal requirements. Why should you be concerned? This inactivity is putting our children at an increased risk for many long-term health problems. Children as young as 6 years old are being diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, a condition that was unheard of in this age group only a few short years ago.

June is Recreation Month. A month set aside to recognize the importance of physical activity so why not make it a family affair and encourage children to get moving. Being active for at least 60 minutes a day can help children grow stronger, do better in school, improve their self-confidence, learn new skills, and have fun while playing with friends and family. Physical activity does not have to be expensive; there are many free and fun activities that can be done around your community and in your own backyard:

- Walk around your neighbourhood or through your community trails
- Play Hop-Scotch, skipping, or freeze-tag
- Go to the playground, sports field or safe open area
- Hold a family dance competition, relay race, or obstacle course
- Go "puddle hopping" on a rainy day

Being active does not have to be complicated; it is all about having fun. For more resources on physical activity and Recreation Month, please visit Recreation Newfoundland & Labrador's website at www.recreationnl.com, and make this summer safe, healthy, and active!

Susan Madore, Wellness Facilitator