

## The Challenge

Inactivity among children and youth is becoming epidemic in Canada; and Nova Scotia is no exception. By the time students reach grade 11, only 1 in 10 is getting the activity they need to achieve health benefits – that’s an accumulated 60 minutes or more of moderate or vigorous physical activity at least five days a week. This graph, from research conducted in 2001-02, shows the percentage of students who reached that level of activity, as measured by a motion counter.

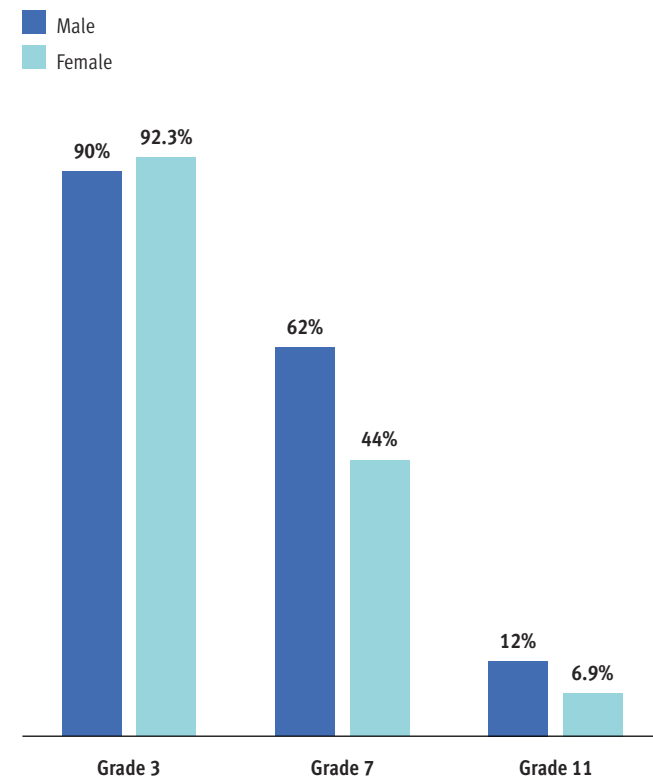
- Only 15 per cent of Nova Scotia high school students take physical education classes.
- Only 25 per cent of Nova Scotia students aged 5–17 years walk or bike to school every day.



“Playing video games is easier than exercising.”

Indianbrook youth, under 10 years

Physical Activity Levels of Nova Scotian Children and Youth



## Why is Physical Activity Important?

Daily physical activity enhances healthy growth and development. It builds strong bones and muscles, strengthens the heart and achieves a healthy weight. There are also social and personal benefits such as helping to make friends, improving physical self-esteem and increasing relaxation. Encouraging kids to build physical activity into their daily routine helps create a pattern that can stay with them for life.

Over the long term, physically active lifestyles help reduce costs related to health care – by reducing incidences of preventable disease, such as type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and some cancers.



“Girls can run just as fast as boys, and girls are afraid they (boys) will embarrass them... I don’t care what boys say – I just do what I want to.”

Bridgewater youth, under 11 years

“We want monkey bars, cement for rollerblading and skateboarding, and a twisty slide.”

Rural youth, under 12 years



## What is Being Done?

A working group of government and non-government leaders was formed in 1998 to address the problem of inactivity among Nova Scotia’s youth. They have created a vision of a future in which Nova Scotia’s children and youth are physically active. A strategy, called Active Kids, Healthy Kids, was created through which to realize that vision. This provincial strategy had wide input from stakeholders and youth through more than 40 consultation sessions.

### A Vision for Nova Scotia

In the year 2010, Nova Scotia will be known as a province that experienced a fundamental shift in its support for active, healthy lifestyles for children, youth, and families. Communities, schools, and workplaces will welcome, encourage, and support physically active lifestyles.

## The Strategy

The Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy has six components – all aimed at increasing the number of children and youth who accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity each day. Following is an overview of those components with examples.

**1 Policy and Program Development**  
Government will lead the planning and implementation of the Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy. Changes in policy and programs are needed to increase the number of schools available for community recreation, increase physical activity in daycares, and create systems for identifying and sharing what programs work.

**2 Active Communities**  
Families, schools, local government, and community organizations will gain the knowledge and resources needed to increase the number of children and youth who are active enough to achieve health benefits. Regional action plans will be created involving sport, recreation, education, health, and other sectors; a youth fitness program will be developed with grade 11 and 12 students as leaders; and a provincial forum will be held to discuss ways to eliminate financial barriers to participation.

**3 Active School Communities**  
Schools must be safe and easy places to be active. Teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community leaders in sport, recreation, and health will work together to make their school a place that supports active, healthy lifestyles among children, youth, and families

**4 Active Community Environments**  
Safe and accessible physical environments, such as green spaces and outdoor rinks, will be created to encourage spontaneous play. Young people will be encouraged to increase their active modes of transportation, such as skateboarding and cycling. The Active and Safe Routes to School program will be implemented and awareness of these issues will be raised among municipal councillors, planners, and engineers.

**5 Public Education**  
Children, youth, and their families need to be educated about why and how to get active. This includes adding physical activity messages to existing parent education programs, training health care providers on advising patients about physical activity, and promoting fair play in sport.

**6 Evaluation and Monitoring**  
To know if the components in the strategy are making a difference, the physical activity levels of children and youth will be evaluated and Nova Scotians will be kept informed on the results. The research will be conducted every four years to monitor progress.

“I had an excellent coach. He was fair and let everyone play.”

Sydney  
Mines youth,  
over 16 years



## For More Information

For more information on the Active Kids, Healthy Kids strategy, including research, background information, and reports, visit [www.gov.ns.ca/src/initiatives\\_pacy.htm](http://www.gov.ns.ca/src/initiatives_pacy.htm) or call (902) 424-7512.



Education

Health Promotion  
Sport and Recreation

In partnership with:

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The Nova Scotia Fitness Association  
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia  
Recreation Nova Scotia  
Sport Nova Scotia  
Dalhousie University  
St. Francis Xavier University  
University College of Cape Breton  
Acadia University

Quotes taken from *Youth's View on Physical Activity*, 2001

# Active Kids, Healthy Kids

A Nova Scotia Physical  
Activity Strategy for  
Children, Youth and Families

