



**Health Promotion**

## **“Physical Activity Levels of Children and Youth in Nova Scotia”**

Campagna et al, 2002

### **Executive Summary**

Prepared by the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission

**Revised December 2002\***

The physically active children and youth research study was conducted during the 2001-2002 school year. This ground-breaking population study of physical activity levels of children and youth used an objective measure (the accelerometer), as opposed to self-report or parent-proxy questionnaire. The accelerometer, a small device attached by a belt at the subject's hip, records the intensity and total number of minutes of activity per day. The accelerometer is a reliable way to measure physical activity.

The purpose of the study was to (a) determine the percentage of children and youth who accumulate 60 minutes of moderate or higher physical activity on five or more days of the week; and (b) examine the factors which may contribute to the physical activity levels of children and youth in the province. The results of this study will be used as a benchmark for future studies.

Dalhousie University, Acadia University, University College of Cape Breton and St. Francis Xavier University conducted the study in partnership with the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission, the Departments of Education and Health, and Health Canada. The principal investigator is Dr. Phil Campagna, associate professor with Dalhousie University.

Between October 2001 and March 2002, approximately 1,700 students from Grades 3, 7 and 11 wore the accelerometer for a period of one week. Eighty-four schools from six Sport and Recreation Commission regions were randomly selected to participate in the study. Students from the selected grades were asked to participate using consent forms that they and their parents had to complete. Four teams responsible for the data collection process worked out of the four participating universities and schools. The data analysis was completed at Dalhousie University.

*\*This summary has been modified to reflect the changes made to the report. The original research report contained an error in the program that underestimated the Grades 7 and 11 activity levels.*

## Results

There were no significant differences in physical activity levels between the six Sport and Recreation regions for any grades. Therefore, the physical activity data from all regions was combined for analysis.

Ninety per cent of grade three boys and girls accumulated 60 minutes or more of moderate and vigorous physical activity on five or more days of the week. Among grade seven students, only 62 per cent of males and 44 per cent of females met the 60 minutes requirement. By grade 11, only 12.6 per cent of males and 6.9 per cent of females accumulated 60 minutes or more of activity.

Further analysis will continue for several months to examine some of the factors that seem to affect the activity levels of children and youth. It seems obvious, however, that Grades 7 and 11 students' activity levels are at an alarmingly low rate, and if this trend continues, will be a health risk in adulthood. A comprehensive strategy is needed to create more opportunities for all children and youth to be physically active and lead healthier lifestyles.

The final report entitled "Physical activity levels of children and youth in Nova Scotia" is available on the Sport and Recreation web site at [www.gov.ns.ca/src](http://www.gov.ns.ca/src).