

Monitoring physical activity levels of Nova Scotia children and youth

Physical inactivity is a major public health and social issue in Canada. Disturbing trends are the number of children and youth who are physically inactive and leading a sedentary lifestyle, and the increasing number of children and youth who are overweight and obese.

A research team, with representatives from four universities, the provincial government and the federal government, will be using an objective monitoring system to establish the physical activity levels of Nova Scotia children and youth.

The objectives of the study are:

- to identify the percentage of children and youth in Nova Scotia who regularly meet the daily standard of 60 minutes of accumulated moderate physical activity in a 24 hour period
- to accurately track changes in physical activity levels of Nova Scotia children and youth over the next several years
- to disseminate information from the study to organizations that develop and implement physical activity/recreation and sport opportunities for children and youth
- to increase the knowledge of academics, professionals, volunteers and the general public regarding the level of physical activity of children and youth in Nova Scotia
- to identify factors impacting activity levels (i.e. whether the child lives near a park or a trail, participates in an organized activity in the community, has a good health status, etc.).
- to develop an infrastructure (i.e. equipment, leadership) to conduct separately funded research and interventions on special populations such as children with asthma, those at risk for diabetes, children with disabilities and children in Aboriginal communities

Brief facts about the study

Approximately 2160 randomly selected students from Grades 3, 7, and 11 in six Sport and Recreation Commission regions of the province will be participating in the study beginning in September, and ending in December 2001. Results should be available in Spring 2002.

The data will be collected in Nova Scotia public schools since the majority of children and youth can be measured there.

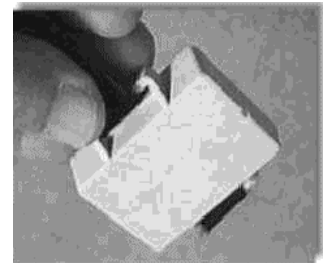
This project is unique in two ways: This is the first provincial study on physical activity in Nova Scotia. This is also the first population based physical activity study in Canada using an objective measure (i.e. an accelerometer). Previous population research on physical activity relied on self-report instruments to measure physical activity.

The accelerometer (pictured below) is a small instrument that records the intensity level of all vertical movement and the precise time of day in which the movement takes place. The accelerometer is attached to the belt on the waist.

A provincial strategy to increase physical activity among children and youth will be ready by December 2001. The research project will assist in evaluating its progress.

Partners

Dalhousie University, Acadia University, University College of
Cape Breton, St. F.X. University
Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission, Departments
of Health and Education
Health Canada



For more information on the research study or the strategy, please contact Mike Arthur at the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission at 424-7512. Information can also be found on the Sport and Recreation Commission web site at www.gov.ns.ca/src.