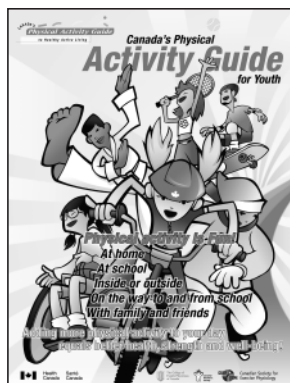
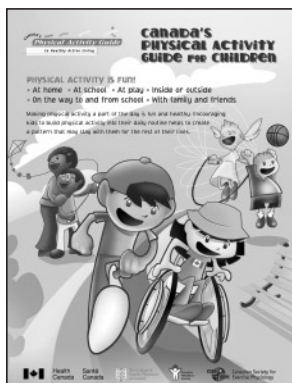


# Health Canada Launches *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth* and Support Resources



Today's children and youth live in a very different world than the generation before them. Children as young as six or seven can occupy themselves for hours on a computer, and older kids now chat on-line rather than meeting in a front yard to play.

The majority of Canadian children ride to school in buses instead of walking. Academic demands have increased while quality physical education within the school setting has been reduced.

Our children are growing up in exciting times, but in order for them to realize their potential and benefit from the opportunities of the new millennium, we need to encourage them to be more physically active.

## Physical Inactivity a Serious Health Issue

More than half of Canada's children and youth are not active enough for healthy growth and development, according to studies done by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

Between 1981 and 1996, the number of **overweight** Canadian children doubled and, during the same 15-year period, the incidence of **obesity** has tripled in both boys and girls.

## Let's Help Children and Youth Get Active

To help Canada's young people move towards healthier lifestyles, Health Canada has launched *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth* and their support resources.

The *Guides* and their support resources were developed by Health Canada and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, and are strongly supported by the Canadian Paediatric Society and the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

The *Guides* recommend that inactive children and youth **increase** the amount of time they **currently** spend being physically active by at least 30 minutes **more** per day and **decrease** the time they **currently** spend on sedentary activities such as watching TV, playing computer games and surfing the Internet, starting with 30 minutes **less** per day.

The increase in physical activity should include a combination of moderate activity – such as brisk walking, skating and bike riding – and vigorous activity, such as running, swimming and playing soccer.

The guidelines recommend that inactive children and youth accumulate this increase in physical activity per day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.

Over several months children and youth should try to **accumulate** at least 90 minutes more physical activity per day and **decrease** by at least 90 minutes per day the amount of time spent on sedentary activities like watching videos and being on the computer.

Our children need to make conscious decisions to be more active in every way they can, by walking more, by spending more time playing outdoors, and by taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

We hope that families, teachers, health-care providers and community leaders make full use of *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth* and the support resources to provide the guidance our children and youth need on this serious health issue.

These materials, if followed, could help prevent premature death and disability when our children become adults. They will also help reduce the potential burden on the health-care system, which faces unprecedented demand in the coming years.

Let's get our children and youth more active and give them the best possible opportunity for a healthy future.

To obtain free copies of Health Canada's new Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth; Family Guides for parents and other care-givers; and Interactive Magazines for children and youth, please call toll-free 1 888 334-9769 or visit the Guide website at [www.healthcanada.ca/paguide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/paguide).