

Teacher's Guide

to physical activity for youth
10-14 years of age



**Everyday It's Fun
and Healthy Too!**

**At home
At school
Inside or outside
On the way to and from school
With family and friends**

Physical inactivity and youth: the health link

Too many of Canada's youth are not active enough for healthy growth and development. Health professionals are concerned and think it is important to educate youth about physical activity and their health and to encourage them to do more.

Additional evidence suggests that a lack of physical activity is dangerous to their health and can be a major contributor to weight gain and obesity. From 1981 to 1996 the prevalence of obesity tripled in both boys and girls.

Today, most youth have learned about *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, understand that smoking is bad for their health, and take an active interest in the environment. Teachers have facilitated this learning. Now, it's time to generate the same enthusiasm and interest in physical activity – the health of Canada's youth depend on it.

This *Teacher's Guide* has been developed to help youth ages 10 to 14 understand the importance of physical activity and how it affects their health. Besides this *Teacher's Guide*, there is a *Let's Get Active Magazine for Youth*, *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* (4 pages), and a *Family Guide* to help support physical activity at home. These have all been designed to help increase physical activity in Canada's youth. There is a similar set of resources for children ages 6 to 9.



Teachers can get the message out!

The goal is to get youth moving more! As a teacher who is in daily contact with Canada's youth, you can do a lot to help. You can build physical activity thinking and behaviour change into the school day and help youth become aware of the importance of physical activity to healthy living.

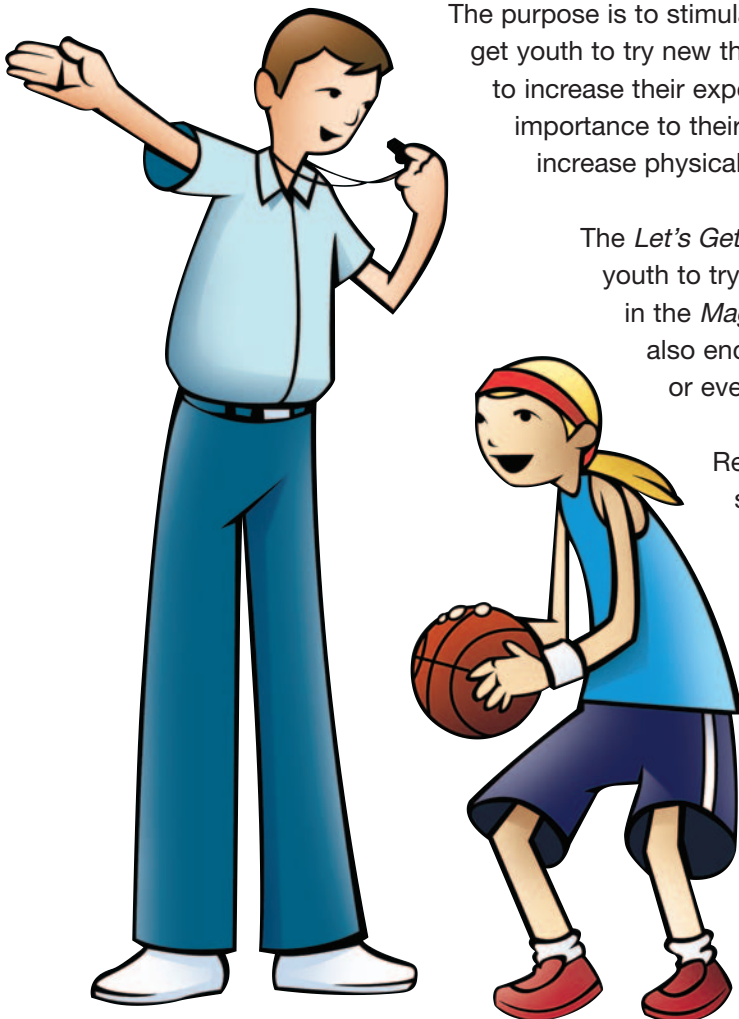
Leading experts in health have concluded that the school is critically important to increasing physical activity among Canada's young people. Teachers can facilitate the learning and discovery of physical activity. The bottom line is that teachers can help youth try to take the first steps that *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* is recommending.

The Public Health Agency of Canada and its partners are hoping that you will want to participate in this new initiative to improve the physical activity levels of Canada's youth. Canada needs to make this an urgent priority. This *Teacher's Guide* will give you some ideas and you probably have many of your own.

The purpose is to stimulate a conversation about physical activity and to get youth to try new things that will make them more active. The goal is to increase their exposure to the need for physical activity and its importance to their overall health and development in an effort to increase physical activity and reduce non-active pursuits.

The *Let's Get Active Magazine* includes a number of activities for youth to try. Perhaps you could incorporate some of the ideas in the *Magazine* into your day-to-day teachings. You could also encourage a class physical activity project for a week or even a month to build momentum for the ideas.

Recognizing that learning takes many forms, we are suggesting that you build physical activity into a number of lessons so that the information is repeated and reinforced over a series of classes throughout the school year.



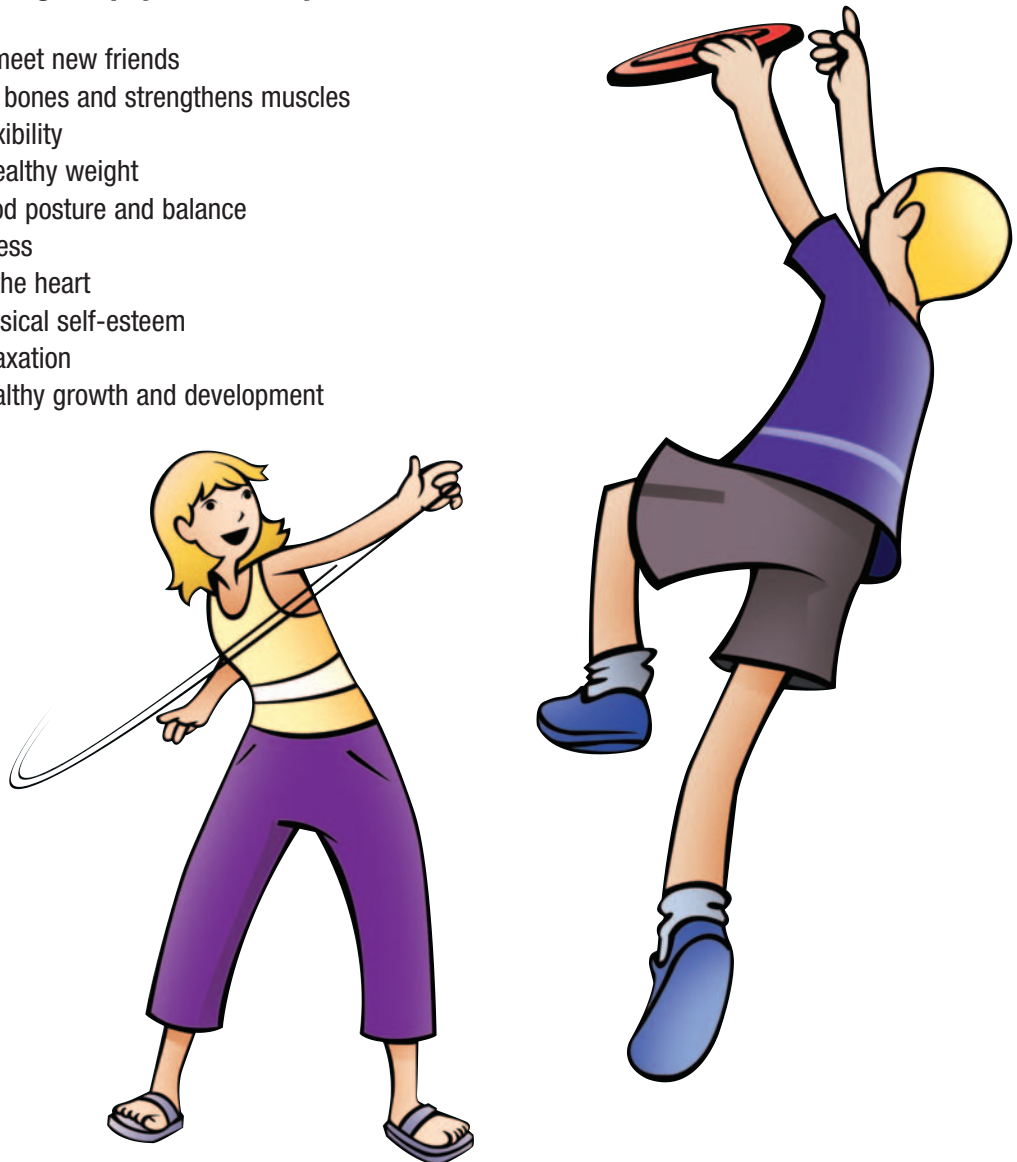
Behaviour change takes effort

We are providing you with information on the basics of behaviour change as well as stories from other teachers who have used these steps successfully. Their stories show that teachers' efforts do not need to be complicated and they do work! Their examples speak volumes about how to make this happen.

Helping youth build physical activity into their daily routine helps to create a pattern that may very well stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Research shows that regular physical activity:

- Helps youth meet new friends
- Builds strong bones and strengthens muscles
- Maintains flexibility
- Achieves a healthy weight
- Promotes good posture and balance
- Improves fitness
- Strengthens the heart
- Improves physical self-esteem
- Increases relaxation
- Enhances healthy growth and development



Ways to change behaviour

Here are five key actions that when used in combination, help youth to try new behaviours and build new life patterns.

Here are the steps to follow:

- 1 Develop Awareness:** Make young people *active participants* in the process. We know that youth are far more motivated when they are part of the decision-making process and not just passive recipients of instruction! Help them become aware of how much activity they do now and how inactive they may be. This helps them pay attention to what they do with their time, which is essential to the next step. There is space in the *Let's Get Active Magazine* for them to write this down.
- 2 Set Goals with Youth:** Goal-setting is part of any change process and helps youth monitor themselves and measure their own progress. In a classroom situation, this may include a class goal to which all the students in the class can contribute. Encourage small incremental steps. Try to reach the goal, assess, revise, reset and try again. Help youth negotiate their own goals so they are involved in making suggestions and revisions to their plans. Here is an example:

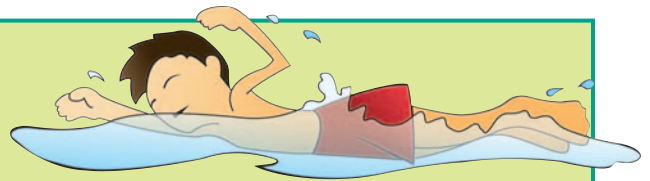
Making Goals Work

Jim set a couple of new goals...

1. Join the after-school swim club and train three days a week
2. Help his family with the garden

How things went...

1. Jim got a friend to go along so he would have some company. Things went well for a week or so, then one day he missed practice because he forgot his bathing suit and towel and another day a group of friends enticed him to go to the video arcade so he missed practice again. His coach told him to always leave a bathing suit and towel in his locker so that would never be a reason to miss practice. The coach also encouraged him to join the "100km Challenge", which had a swim club t-shirt as a reward. This helped him get to practice regularly and he was less tempted to go off with friends.
2. Helping his family in the garden wasn't much fun at first. Jim was always thinking about what his friends were doing and what he was missing by not being with them, so he and his family made a plan. Everybody was busy and really needed help so they decided Jim could earn some money for his garden work. He also decided to tie the work into a science project. He studied and learned more about the soil, the kinds of plants that grow best where he lives and the different things you can do to keep a garden healthy. What started out as boring turned into a profitable and healthy adventure!



- 3 Give Specific Feedback and Praise:** Provide helpful, specific feedback about activities tried and goals set on a regular basis. Praise and reward small steps.
- 4 Get Youth to Commit:** Talk about the activity goals frequently and publicly to strengthen their commitment to the plan.
- 5 Reward and Recognize Change:** Reinforce behaviour change and celebrate successes through rewards and recognition.

Let's Get Active



Canada's Guidelines for Increasing Physical Activity in Youth

1. **Increase** the time **currently** spent on physical activity starting with 30 minutes **more** per day.
2. **Reduce** "non-active" time spent on TV, video, computer games and surfing the Internet, starting with 30 minutes **less** per day.

You need to encourage youth to build up their physical activity throughout the day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.



This increase in physical activity should include:

*Moderate activities like brisk walking, skating, or bike riding
and

**Vigorous activities like running, supervised weight training, basketball or soccer



This chart shows you how it works!

MONTH	Daily INCREASE in moderate* activity (Minutes)		Daily INCREASE in vigorous** activity (Minutes)		Total Daily INCREASE in physical activity (Minutes)	Daily DECREASE in non-active time (Minutes)
Month 1	at least 20	+	10	=	30	30
Month 2	at least 30	+	15	=	45	45
Month 3	at least 40	+	20	=	60	60
Month 4	at least 50	+	25	=	75	75
Month 5	at least 60	+	30	=	90	90

Note: Youth who are already quite active should record all their moderate and vigorous activities for a few days. They can total up the minutes, then progress gradually from there until they reach at least 90 minutes of daily physical activity.

The most important ideas about physical activity

Physical activity is fun!

Everyone, no matter their age, height, weight, natural abilities or skills, needs to learn that physical activity is fun and it does not have to be competitive.

While participation in sports is encouraged, youth need to know that sports are not the only way to stay active. Not all youth enjoy competition. For those who don't, physical activity alternatives such as hiking, household chores, cycling, walking and other activities are essential.

- Everyone needs physical activity to be healthy.
- Take a first step! Try something new!
- Canada's youth are not active enough. They need to increase their levels of physical activity by at least 30 minutes a day to start.
- At least 10 minutes of this increased activity needs to be vigorous. That is, activity that makes their hearts beat faster, makes them breathe more deeply and makes their bodies sweat/perspire.

Incorporating physical activity into your classroom activities and learning programs can be fun!

Ideas for fun physical activities

- Classroom physical activity circuits – place signs around the room to create stations for students to work on components such as all-jump, chair sit-ups, line jumps, wall push-ups, and groin stretch.
- On-the-spot hip hop – create hip hop dances by moving in place. Teach a few moves like the “Wave” with arms, foot tap, sky reach, hip push. Encourage the students to make up their own moves.
- Body-part stretch – name a body part and each person does their own stretch. Encourage youth to learn stretches from each other. Remind them to maintain the natural curve in their lower back while stretching.
- Do the wave – one person starts an activity, either stretches or cardio-vascular, then it moves around the room like a wave.
- Do a variety of desk exercises such as knee lifts, arm reaches, straddle stretch, desk push-ups, lunge with foot on chair and side bending reaching over the desk.
- Four-way mirror – follow a person near the front of the room leading some stretches. As the leader turns all the students turn to follow a new leader at the new front. Turn to follow a new leader in each direction.

Some things for youth to know

Over half of young people are not active enough for healthy growth and development.

Ask the class why they think this is true. Discuss with them what they do with their time and how much of their day is devoted to physical activities.

Ask the class what types of physical activity they like and why they like those particular activities.

Ask the class what has changed in their generation to make them less active than their parents were at the same age. This will likely start a discussion about television, computers, etc. Some youth may also raise the issue of a “lack of time.”

Health benefits come from doing the right variety of physical activities.

Ask the class what types of activities they should be doing. Start a chart with each type of activity as a heading at the top of a column.

Ask them what these activities are like and what effect they have on the body. Add these notes to the chart under the appropriate heading.

Here is an outline to help you guide discussions:

Aerobic or Endurance Activities

...involves continuous movement
...causes more rapid breathing and a faster heartbeat, and makes you feel warm

Flexibility Activities

...involves bending, stretching and reaching
...keeps the joints moving and helps with relaxation

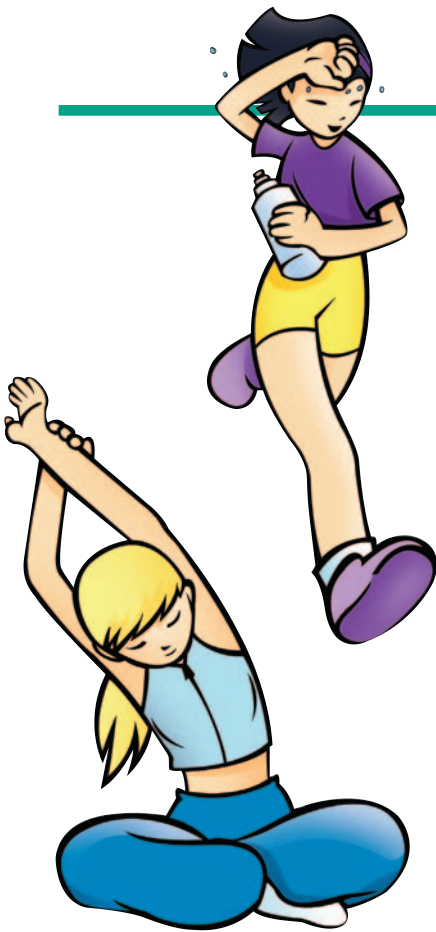
Strength Activities

...involves lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling
...builds and strengthens muscles and bones

There are many good activities from which to choose.

Ask the class to help you build a list. Add all the suggestions to the chart you have started, putting each activity in the correct column.

Some examples are included in *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* for your reference and to help trigger discussion.



Aerobic activities:

Running, jogging, skating, football, hockey, basketball, swimming, dancing

Flexibility activities:

Stretching, gymnastics, dancing, swimming, yoga, martial arts

Strength activities:

Lifting weights, carrying groceries, bowling, shovelling the snow, raking the leaves



Discuss with the class how they could become more active. Also use the examples from the *Let's Get Active Magazine*.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth says that youth need to increase their physical activities by at least 30 minutes every day to start and 10 minutes of that increased activity should be vigorous. Moderate activity includes things like brisk walking, skating, and bike riding. Vigorous activity includes things like running, supervised weight training, basketball, and soccer. They also need to reduce non-active pursuits like TV, computers and video games by at least 30 minutes a day to start. Youth can build up their physical activity in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.

These changes should continue over several months as shown in the chart on page 6 until they have increased their physical activity levels by at least 90 minutes a day and reduced sedentary activities by at least 90 minutes a day.

Ask the class what they think of the new guidelines. Do they think this is an achievable goal?

Possible class projects

- 1 From the discussion held in the class, estimate how much physical activity is done by the class on a daily basis. Set a class goal to reach by the end of the week and month.
- 2 Challenge another class from the same age group to see which class can make the biggest improvement. Put up a chart so that the kids can fill in their activities and the amount of time every day when they get to school. Celebrate the improvements.
- 3 Take the class for a nature walk or a treasure hunt.
- 4 Encourage the more active youth to help those who are less active to try new things. This will serve two purposes. It will increase the physical activity levels of the non-active youth and it will increase the more active youth's efforts.
- 5 Encourage young people to sign up for the physical activity opportunities in your school – house leagues, after-school sports, physical education class, etc.
- 6 Create bulletin boards and display pictures and stories with an activity theme. For example, display pictures of school athletes and school teams, etc.
- 7 Celebrate physical activity with theme days such as “walk to school days”.



Here are some successful ideas used by teachers

Jed and Su-lee build physical activity into homeroom sessions

Both these teachers were working with 12 year olds. Most of them were getting little activity outside of gym class. The teachers decided to work together to make physical activity more of a priority in the lives of their students.

The first thing they did was to post a copy of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* in the classroom. The *Guide* includes a chart showing the amount of physical activity everyone should be doing each day and suggested activities.

Next, they took a few minutes to talk about the importance of physical activity and to find out how much the students knew. During this discussion the teachers talked about the types of physical activity outlined in the *Guide* and asked students to point out activities in the *Guide* that showed endurance, flexibility, and strength. Following this discussion, the teachers gave out progress charts so they could record their activities for an average day (similar to the *Physical Activity Record* on page 4 of the *Let's Get Active Magazine*). When they had completed the progress chart the teachers had each student add up the time they spent doing physical activities and the time they spent sleeping or sitting. They collected all the sheets and made a big chart showing all the physical activity time and activities for the class. This became their benchmark.

They then challenged the students to increase their physical activity levels. Another chart made by the students entitled "I'll try to do more" was put up on the wall. This chart showed a list of many types of activities. The teachers encouraged the students to try new things and to record their activity when they did 10 minutes of any activity on the list. The class set a goal for themselves based on the benchmark.

The students found out that both classes were doing this so they set up a friendly competition. Which class would be first to increase their average physical activity time by 30 minutes a day for every student in the class? The teachers encouraged the students and made a point of leading a 10-minute physical activity session every day during the homeroom period.

After about a month, both classes had made giant steps forward and the teachers celebrated by taking them out together on a nature walk. This program was discussed with excitement all over the school and eventually every class in the school was participating. The kids now push teachers for physical activity breaks and they are proud to be at a school where physical activity is so valued.

Teacher builds physical activity lesson into English class

Reva had been reading about the problem of physical inactivity in Canada's youth. She became concerned when she learned that over half of Canada's children and youth were not active enough for healthy growth and development. She decided to do something about it. As she was an English teacher, not a physical education teacher, she felt she could help by building some awareness and understanding.

She found some articles for her students to read, telephoned the Public Health Agency of Canada's toll-free number for *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* and the additional support resources and decided that she would give her students an assignment on the topic. She gave the students a copy of the *Let's Get Active Magazine* and asked them to take the *Family Guide* home.

Her goal was to get every child in her class thinking about the importance of physical activity as well as doing their writing and presentation assignments for English class. She developed a series of assignments that would be done over a couple of months. She also picked up some books on physical activity from the library for the kids to use for reference.

The writing assignments included these titles:

- What I did to be active yesterday.
- I like soccer (or another favorite activity) because...
- Physical activity and my body.
- I am trying new things to increase my physical activity by at least 30 minutes a day. Here's what I tried...
- Describe the physical activities you did in the past week.
- I tried these new activities and I feel...

For the class presentations, the students were asked to describe how to do their favourite physical activity. They could use props if they wished!

Reva also suggested to the students that they keep a journal to record their physical activity efforts. She told them to record their non-physical activities as well. After a couple of months she asked the class if they were doing more physical activity now than when they started working on their assignments. Most of the students said yes. Then she asked them if they were spending less time on non-active pursuits like watching TV or computers. Many of her students had not increased their activity level by 30 minutes a day, but they were working on it. Most of them had reduced their sedentary activities by very little. Their results showed that they could find time in their day to be more physically active if they tried.

Based on the increases they had achieved for the previous month, each class member set a new goal for the next month and wrote it in their journals. The teacher would ask them periodically how they were doing to remind them about the importance of physical activity to their health.

Geography teacher builds physical activity into classroom and students walk across Canada

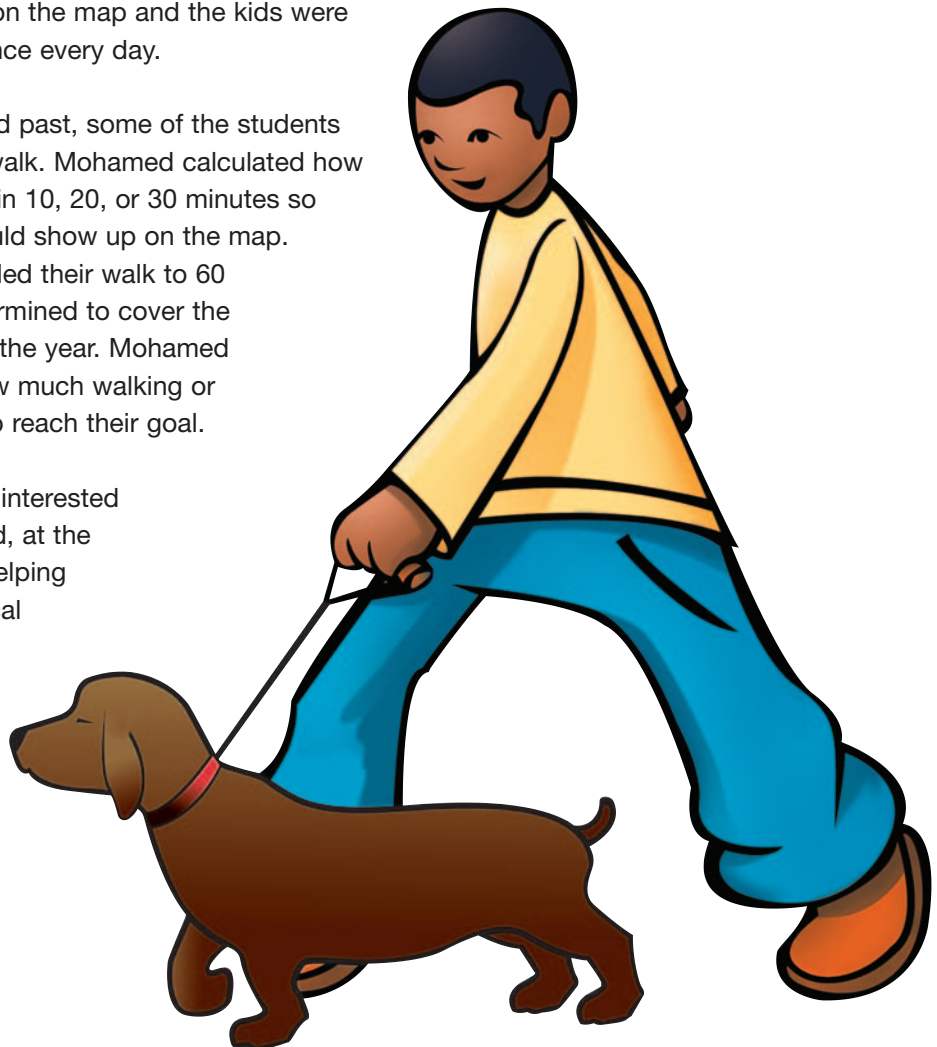
In September, Mohamed decided to modify his unit on 'Exploring Canada' and use it to increase the physical activity levels of his 14-year-old students. The plan was for the whole year. He got a large map and posted it on the wall. He marked the Trans Canada Trail on the map and told his class that they were going to walk the equivalent of across Canada and learn about the geography of the country as they travelled.

Every day, students would walk for 10, 20 or 30 minutes and put their total up on a chart. Mohamed would then plot the distance the class had travelled on the map as if they were actually walking from coast to coast.

Each time they had geography class, Mohamed would have pictures or videos of the virtual ground they had covered and they would talk about the terrain and landscapes they had passed along the way. Their 'travels' were accumulating on the map and the kids were busy building up more distance every day.

By the time three months had past, some of the students were able to run instead of walk. Mohamed calculated how much further they could run in 10, 20, or 30 minutes so that the extra kilometers would show up on the map. Some of the students extended their walk to 60 minutes. The class was determined to cover the whole country by the end of the year. Mohamed helped them to calculate how much walking or running they needed to do to reach their goal.

This approach to geography interested the students a great deal and, at the same time, Mohamed was helping them to increase their physical activity levels.



Health class focuses on physical activity

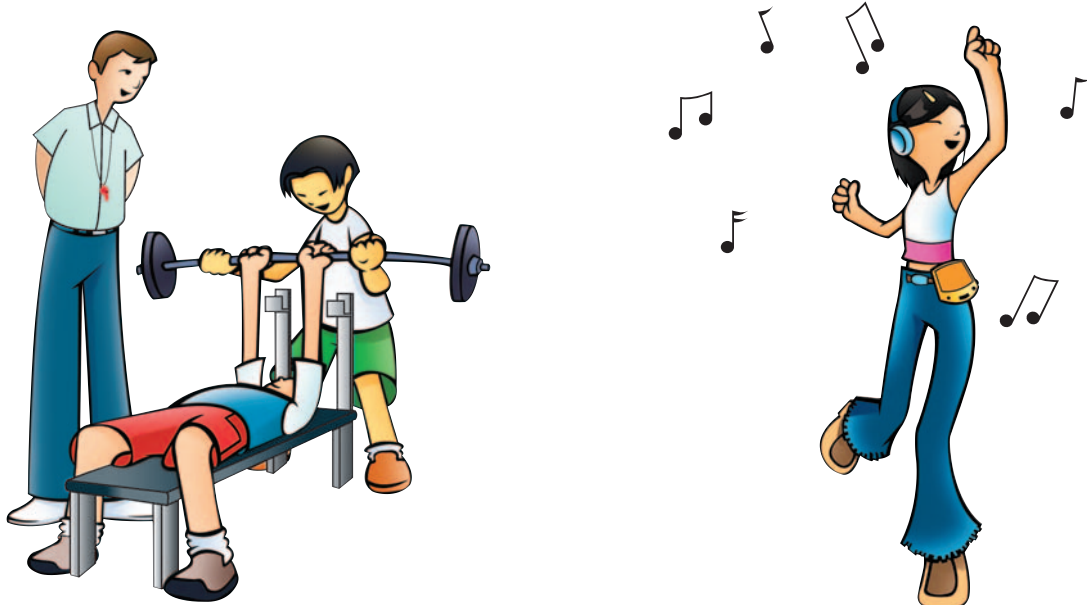
Nicole, as a health teacher, was aware that physical inactivity was dangerous to youth's health. She decided to take some time and make physical activity a focus of her curriculum. She ordered sufficient copies of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* and copies of the *Family Guide*.

She put up *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* in the classroom where she taught health. She wanted her students to become familiar with the types of physical activity they needed, and she wanted them to understand how different activities could contribute to the endurance, flexibility and strength needs of the body.

With each class, she would discuss one type of physical activity. She would consider what type of activity it was (vigorous or moderate aerobic activity, strength activity, or flexibility activity) and how it helped the body. Then she would ask all the students to do that activity for at least 10 minutes as part of their homework assignment.

For example, for endurance or aerobic activities she would discuss activities such as running, jumping, brisk walking, biking, swimming, dancing, skating and hopping. She would explain that these activities are cardiovascular activities that strengthen the heart and lungs. When the students had tried the activity, she asked them to describe how that activity made them feel.

For flexibility activities she would talk about things like bending and stretching and she incorporated stretch breaks into the classroom routine. She encouraged the students to suggest a stretch for the day, let one of the kids demonstrate the stretch and then she and the class would do it together. Then they would talk about how that stretch felt.



For strength activities she would point out that these were needed to maintain posture and build strong muscles and bones. She talked about pushing and pulling, carrying things like groceries, push-ups, weights, climbing, raking leaves and shovelling snow. Some of the strength activities they tried included carrying piles of books, doing push-ups, raking leaves in the school yard in the Fall, and working out in the school's supervised weightroom after class, if they wished.

Nicole talked about the fact that just doing one of these activities wasn't enough. She had the class estimate the time for strength and flexibility activities and then had them add up the times until they could see what would make a 10-, 20-, and a 30-minute activity session. This helped the students understand what to plan when they had a little time in their day and what to plan when they had more time.

Nicole encouraged class members to talk about the new activities they were trying so that others in the class might try them the next week. Getting everyone in the class to increase their physical activity level by 30 minutes a day proved to be a challenge, but the class continued to work on it. Reducing non-active activities like TV watching and computer games proved even more challenging. But Nicole continued to work with her class to increase physical activity levels.

To help them, Nicole invited guest speakers to talk about different physical activities. She taught them about setting goals – and setting new ones when they reached the first target of an additional 30 minutes a day of physical activity. The students learned that they should keep increasing their physical activities until they reached at least 90 minutes a day. Nicole handed out a progress chart she developed for each student to record their activities. She also put up posters on the homeroom wall outlining the three components of physical activity.

Endurance activities are continuous activities that benefit the heart, lungs and circulatory system. They make you breathe deeper, your heart beat faster and your body sweat/perspire.

Flexibility activities are activities that involve stretching, reaching and bending. They keep the muscles relaxed and the joints mobile.

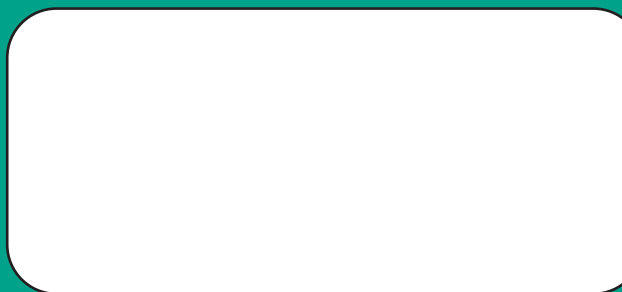
Strength activities are those activities that use the muscles against some form of resistance. They build the muscles and bones as well as improve posture.

Endorsers

The following organizations have endorsed *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Youth* and the support resources.

- Active & Safe Routes to School
- Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability
- Arthritis Society
- Assembly of First Nations
- Association of Local Public Health Agencies
- Block Parent Program of Canada
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine
- Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women & Sport & Physical Activity
- Canadian Association for Young Children
- Canadian Association of Principals
- Canadian Child Care Federation
- Canadian Council on Social Development
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute
- Canadian Home and School Federation
- Canadian Institute of Child Health
- Canadian Intramural Recreation Association
- Canadian Lung Association
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Canadian Paediatric Society
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Psychiatric Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- Canadian Public Health Association
- Canadian School Boards Association
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology
- Canadian Special Olympics
- Canadian Teachers' Federation
- Children's Safety Association of Canada
- Child Welfare League of Canada
- Coalition for Active Living
- College of Family Physicians of Canada
- Dietitians of Canada
- Family Service Canada
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Girl Guides of Canada – Guides du Canada
- Go for Green
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
- Lifesaving Society
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- National Institute of Nutrition
- Osteoporosis Society of Canada
- Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada
- Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada
- Safe Kids Canada
- Scouts Canada
- United Way of Canada
- Victoria Order of Nurses for Canada
- Vanier Institute of the Family
- YMCA Canada
- YWCA Canada

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- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia
- Hospital for Sick Children
- IWK Health Centre
- Janeway Children's Hospital
- Montreal Children's Hospital
- Stollery Children's Hospital
- Winnipeg Children's Hospital

Active bodies need energy

Follow *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to make wise food choices



Healthy activity is safe activity

Canada



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