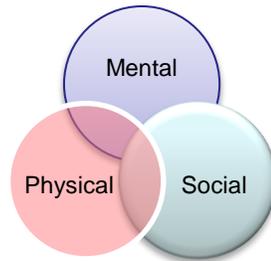


## Active Living and Mental Health

### Health is not just physical

Mental and physical health have been seen as separate from one another, however, all parts of one's health are linked. "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being", as defined by the World Health Organization (2009).



Physical activities contribute to mental health just as our emotions can impact physical responses. By promoting our physical health through exercise, nutrition and sleep, we can impact our mental health.

### Active Living

Being physically active is a key part of good health for all school aged children. Physical activity is not only helpful for the body but also for the mind. Physical activity releases endorphins that improve mood. Being active can help to reduce depression and anxiety symptoms. Even 10-15 minutes of activity at a time can make a difference.

Being active can help to:

- Improves your mood
- Cope with stress
- Feel a sense of control
- Increase energy
- Increase self-confidence and self-esteem
- Improve concentration
- Improves sleep patterns
- Keep healthy
- Have fun



[kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)

School aged children should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. For optimal health children and youth need to sweat, step, sleep, and sit the right amounts as outlined by the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. According to ParticipACTION, **only nine per cent of kids get enough heart-pumping physical activity.**

<http://www.csep.ca>

### Active Living Start at Home

Healthy habits start to develop early. Through positive interactions and positive, deliberate learning opportunities, children and youth in healthy families develop the routines that enable them to develop in healthy ways.

When kids find an activity that's fun, they will most likely do more, get better at it, feel accomplished, and want to do it even more. Likewise, if they're pushed into activities they don't like, they're unlikely to want to participate and will end up frustrated and will feel like exercising is a chore.

[kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)

### Strategies to Get Kids Active and Stay Active

- Make physical activity part of the daily routine. From household chores to an after-dinner walk, keep your family active every day. Allow time every day for free play. Playing tag, riding bikes around the neighborhood, and building snowmen are fun and healthy activities.
- Limit time spent in sedentary activities, such as watching TV, being online, and playing video games.
- Keep a variety of games and sports equipment on hand. It doesn't have to be expensive
- Expose kids to a variety of activities, games and sports at an early age. Keep the focus on fun.
- If your child doesn't enjoy the activity, it might be a good idea to switch to something else. Focus on choice and keep positive to make this transition smooth. If the child feels they have failed at the activity this might place a negative view towards sports and physical activity in general.
- Consider your child's strengths, interests, and body type when choosing activities. A child's personality and temperament can also impact the success of an activity. Recognize that some kids may enjoy taking risks, being competitive, or playing on teams while others may prefer solo activities, or ones that focus on control and discipline. Encourage activities that would best suit the child.
- Set a good example. Kids will look to their parents and other adult role models for guidance, support, and encouragement. Show your kids that exercise is important by regularly exercising yourself.

[kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)

### What about teenagers?

As kids get older and demands increase on their time, this can make getting an hour of exercise more challenging. Free time spent on sedentary activities like watching TV, playing video games or spending time online can add to a lack of physical activity.

- Help your teen stay active by finding an exercise regimen that fits with their schedule.
- Teens can work physical activity into everyday routines, such as walking to school, doing chores, or finding an active part-time job.
- Some teens may overdo it when it comes to fitness. If your teen refuses to eat certain food groups, becomes overly concerned with body image, appears to be exercising compulsively, or has a sudden change in weight, talk with your doctor.

[kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)

### Resources for Active Living

**Canadian Pediatric Society** [www.cps.ca/](http://www.cps.ca/)  
**Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology:** [www.csep.ca/](http://www.csep.ca/)  
**Kelty Mental health resource centre** <http://kellymentalhealth.ca/>  
**Kidshealth - Staying Fit:** [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)  
**ParticipACTION** [www.participaction.com](http://www.participaction.com)