

Feature



Do MORE... Watch LESS



Health officials have become increasingly alarmed by the rapid increase in obesity among Canadian youth. Over the past 25 years, the overweight/obesity rate of adolescences aged 12-17 more than doubled from 14% to 29%, and their obesity rate tripled from 3% to 9%.

The amount of time children are spending on “screen-based” activities (i.e., TV watching, surfing the net, playing video and hand-held games), has been implicated as one of the causes for this increase. To reverse the obesity trend it is time for children and adults to Do MORE and Watch LESS. (Continued on page 2)



Active Healthy Kids Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

Canada's Overall Grade is D

The report card provides a snapshot of the state of physical activity behaviours and opportunities for children and youth in Canada.

Here are a few of the items graded.

For more information and to see the complete report go to: www.activehealthykids.ca

Screen Time

Less than 20% of children are meeting the Canadian Paediatric Society guideline of two hours or less of screen time daily. More than half are watching 2-4 hours of television daily, and approximately a third are spending two hours or more in front of the computer.

GRADE D-



Family Physical Activity

Only 36% of parents regularly engage in physical activity with their children, and as many as 32% report that they rarely or never play active games or sport with their kids.

GRADE D



Ensuring Kids Are Active

Only 55% of parents take their children to physical activities, a drop from 60% in 2000.

GRADE D



Organized Sport Participation

Nearly half of kids participate in organized sport 2-3 times per week, but girls and those from low income families report lower participation.

GRADE C-



Overweight and Obesity

New direct measure data indicates obesity in children continues to rise, most notably among adolescents aged 12-17.

GRADE F

Physical Activity Levels

Less than half of Canada's children meet the minimum daily physical activity requirements to support basic healthy growth and development.

GRADE D

Active Transportation

Less than a quarter of kids regularly walk to school and less than 10% ride their bike to school.

GRADE D

Physical Activity at School

Recent regional studies report low opportunity for daily physical activity in schools, but nationwide data will not be available until Fall 2006. Provincial policies have begun implementation in Alberta and Ontario.

GRADE INC

Do MORE ... Watch LESS

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According to a report on the role of media in childhood obesity by the Keiser Family Foundation, screen-based activities may contribute to youth obesity in one or more of the following ways:

- The time youth spend in front of the screen displaces time they could spend being physically active.
- The food advertisements youth are exposed to on TV influence them to make unhealthy food choices.
- Youth snack excessively while in front of the screen and they eat less healthy meals when eating in front of the TV.
- Watching TV and videos lowers the metabolic rates of youth below any other waking activity.

Saskatchewan Television Viewing Habits

General Population (Age 2 and over) = 21.2 hours/ week

Children 2- 11 years = 15.2 hours / week

Teens 12- 17 years = 12.7 hours / week.

Please note: This does not include other screen-based time such as video games and computer use.

(Statistics Canada, 2004)

“ The easiest way to reduce inactivity is to turn off the TV set. Almost anything uses more energy than watching TV”

- Dr William Dietz, Director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control

TIPS for Families to Do MORE and Watch LESS

- Don't leave the TV on when not watching it.
- Plan ahead for TV viewing to avoid endless channel surfing.
- Don't put a TV in the children's bedrooms.
- Limit TV time to 1 to 2 hours max.
- Make TV active time. Try do push ups or crunches during commercials.
- Keep the TV off during meals.
- Designate a day or two each week that are TV free.
- Try to limit/ reduce other screen time like computer use and video games.
- Avoid using the TV as a babysitter.
- Instead of watching sports go out and play.
- If children say they are bored - don't worry, for children boredom often leads to active play.
- Go for a walk, play a game, read a book.

Is the Family TV changing your Grocery List?



Are your children adding special requests to your grocery list?

Children, 2- 15, are good at persuading parents to buy foods they see on commercials. Manufacturers use commercials to promote new products often with the help of popular TV characters like Sponge Bob Square Pants, Spider Man or Winnie the Pooh.

Here's what's on TV:

- Food makes up 50% of all ads on children's programs
- Fast foods, candy and pre-sweetened cereals are the most common foods advertised
- These foods are high in calories, fat, sugar and salt and provide fewer nutrients children need including protein, vitamins, minerals and fiber
- Only 4% of food advertisements are for healthy foods- whole grains, vegetables and fruit or milk

Here's what it means for your family:

- Preschoolers who watch TV while eating may tend to eat more and become less sensitive to knowing when they feel full
- The more TV children watch the higher their risk for high blood cholesterol levels
- Youth who watch TV 4 hours a day are 2 ½ times more likely to be obese

Your grocery list should include foods your children like to eat. Talk about the foods on commercials – do they fit within Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating? Be a role model and fill the fridge and cupboards with healthy snacks.

Val Irvine - SHR Public Health Nutritionist