

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL LITERACY: CHILDREN AND YOUTH 5-17

## GUIDANCE TOOL FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

We all have a role to play in promoting physical activity for improved health and quality of life.

**Physical literacy** is the motivation, confidence, movement skills, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility to participate in physical activities for life.

**Active play** involves taking part in play and games that use the large muscles of the body, which leads to faster and deeper breathing, and a faster heartbeat.

Children and youth become **physically literate** through **active play** and general physical activity, which develops movement skills that enable participation in activities as they age. **Getting active early** increases the likelihood that participation and its benefits will continue into adulthood, allowing for a lifetime of activity, health and well-being.



### EVERY MOVE COUNTS!

Adding **any** amount of physical activity benefits health. Encourage clients/patients to start with something small and focus on fun!

### The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines recommend children and youth age 5 to 17 years:

- **Be active each day** - enjoy **several hours** of light intensity physical activity AND at least **1 hour** of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily
- Take part in **muscle and bone-strengthening** activities **3 times** per week or more
- **Sleep well, 8-11 hours**, with consistent bed/wake-up times
- **Minimize** and break up **screen and sedentary time** as much as possible

View guidelines in full:  
[csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/children-youth/](https://csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/children-youth/)



SCAN ME

### Ideas to add in more activity:

- When possible, replace screen time with active time
- Spend more time outdoors
- Play with a neighbour/friend
- Walk a dog
- Visit a playground
- Go on a scavenger hunt - use your imagination
- Choose active transportation (e.g. walking, cycling, rolling, bussing)

Additional activity ideas:  
[pise.ca/physical-literacy/virtual-physical-activity-resources/](https://pise.ca/physical-literacy/virtual-physical-activity-resources/)



SCAN ME

**Use this tool** to guide evidence-informed conversations with clients/patients/caregivers about physical activity, tailored to their current status and interest. The puzzle pieces in the image below indicate which physical literacy domain(s) align with each question and key message.



**Motivation**



**Movement Competence**



**Confidence**



**Knowledge and Understanding**

### Potential Questions to Ask

(consider age-appropriateness, i.e., asking child, youth and/or caregiver)



What motivates (or matters most) to you/your child (e.g., making friends, having fun, getting stronger, growing, etc.)?



Do you know why it's important to be physically active?



Is there an activity you want to do but are finding too hard? Is there an activity that you are afraid you won't be able to do or don't know how to do?



### Key Messages



Positive physical activity experiences will increase a child's confidence in that activity.



Simply going outdoors helps children and youth be more physically active.



Children and youth learn to be active and to enjoy movement by following parents' and caregivers' leads.



Many actions are interconnected, (e.g. less screen time and more time outside leads to better sleep, and children who sleep well have more energy to be active).



Children and youth who are physically active tend to do better in school and socially, and are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviours.



Participating in different types of physical activities will help develop the underlying movement skills (e.g., running, jumping, throwing, balancing, climbing, etc.) that lead to lifelong enjoyment and participation in physical activity.



Playing and getting active with others is a great way to make friends and learn how to work together.



Regular physical activity improves mood, emotional and sleep regulation, problem-solving skills, and ability to cope with anxiety and depression.



Using active transportation is a great way for children and youth to get around and gain independence while adding more activity; it also helps them arrive at school ready to learn



Developing physical literacy is a lifelong journey. Starting in childhood enables participation in many activities that contribute to improved health and quality of life.



Being active helps children and youth grow strong muscles and bones, gain confidence and build self-esteem.

### Additional Tip for Client/Patient Interaction



Recreation centres may have free and/or low-cost opportunities. Getting active outdoors is another great low-barrier option.



Encourage them to try different activities to find something fun. Having a positive experience while being active increases motivation to continue participating.