

# HELP YOUR KIDS TAKE A BREAK FROM SCREEN TIME

Taking a break from screens such as computers, television, video and hand-held devices can be a challenge. However, sitting for several hours a day can put children at risk for preventable health problems, including Type 2 diabetes, obesity and heart disease. According to the [24-Hour Movement Guideline for Children and Youth](#), recreational screen time for children should be limited to less than two hours per day.



Here are some tips for parents to help reduce screen time:

- Schedule daily screen-free playtime
- Spend time outdoors with family and friends
- Take 5 to 20 minutes active breaks
- Choose active modes of transportation to and from school

If the use of screens can't be avoided, try yoga, dance or exercise videos or playing video games with movement to incorporate physical activity into your child's day.

This material is provided by York Region Public Health. For more information on physical activity, please visit [york.ca/healthyschools](http://york.ca/healthyschools)

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## Public Health

1-877-464-9675

TTY 1-866-512-6228

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# THE WHOLE DAY FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-GET ACTIVE AND BUILD YOUR BEST DAY!



Keeping active throughout the day supports success in the classroom, on the field and with friends. Go for quick wins and non-competitive activities to keep moving.

The [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#) outlines current physical activity recommendations for children and youth. By including movement throughout the whole day, whether at school, home, or the community, getting 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity and several hours of varied light physical activity is doable!

Look for ways to balance the day with informal activities like gardening, raking leaves, or playing tag at the park. Participate in indoor or outdoor family chores. Choose walking, biking, or a scooter instead of taking the bus or car and make sure to wear protective gear. Encourage family members to park cars farther from the mall or grocery store entrance and take stairs instead of an elevator or escalator whenever possible.

Look for “active time” opportunities throughout the whole day. For ideas go to [Help Kids Build their Best Day](#). Set a positive example by being physically active as a family and support each other with lots of praise! For more information on physical activity visit [york.ca/healthyschools](http://york.ca/healthyschools).

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# MINDFUL SCREEN TIME

Mindful screen time is all about balance. Encouraging children and youth to balance screen time with other activities like sports, hobbies and time with friends and family can help build healthy habits for the future.

Parents and caregivers can help with mindful screen time habits by setting good examples and providing guidance. Here are some tips you can try:

## **Create screen time rules together**

- Talk and listen – work together to decide how to have mindful screen time
- Develop a plan the whole family can follow; review the plan every few months
- Try to include no more than two hours of recreational screen time per day
- Aim for less recreational screen time and more educational screen time
- Set time limits to help reduce periods of prolonged sitting
- Turn off screens when no one is using them
- Allow time for gradual changes in behaviour
- Be consistent and model healthy habits



Screens are a big part of our day, but there are many health benefits related to reducing screen time including boosting your mood and improving physical health. Learning to be mindful about screen time together can be good for the whole family!

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# DRESS FOR WINTER PLAY

December to March are the coldest months in Canada. Here are some tips to keep your child warm and comfortable while they are at school:

- Dress in three layers:
  - Inner layer to keep moisture away from skin
  - Middle layer to retain body heat
  - Outer wind breaking layer
- Let your child put on their own outerwear at home so they are comfortable doing this at school
- Pack extra dry clothes, such as socks and mitts, and remind your child to change as soon as clothing gets wet
- Wear a hat to cover the ears and head
- Try a neck warmer without loose ends that covers the chin and face
- Wear mitts to keep fingers together instead of gloves with fingers
- Wear boots big enough for wool socks and room for toes
- Stay active in the cold – make snow angels and build snow castles to keep warm
- Learn about staying warm and safe, and [extreme cold](#) facts



If your child is dressed appropriately for the weather conditions, they can play with other children while following COVID-19 Public Health guidelines. Taking breaks outside the classroom helps children learn, be attentive and focus.

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# GIVE THE GIFT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

When choosing gifts this season, consider items that will keep your children active and have a lasting impact on their health. Consider gifts they can enjoy over and over again, such as:

**Sports equipment**      Skipping rope, football, soccer ball, baseball glove and bat, skateboard, skates, hockey net, basketball net, sports helmet, bicycle, toboggan or snowshoes

**Active clothes**      T-shirts, track suit, swimsuit, ski suit, knee and elbow pads, hat/scarf and waterproof mitts, sport jersey, running shoes, warm winter boots, water shoes, reflective clothing or a water bottle

**Activities**      Swim, dance, aerobics or sports lessons; parks and recreation program, day pass to an indoor or outdoor playground (e.g. rock climbing, water park, bike, scooter or trampoline park) while following COVID-19 Public Health guidelines



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# IT'S TIME TO GET KIDS PHYSICALLY ACTIVE AGAIN!



Physical activity has unquestionable benefits to the growth and development of children and youth. It is associated with higher health-related quality of life, improved cardiovascular health, bone health, immune function, cognitive development and academic achievement. It is also known to promote healthy brain development and to be effective at preventing and treating anxiety and depression.

During the pandemic, children and youth have been profoundly impacted socially, emotionally and physically due to all the public health restrictions. As we move toward recovering from the pandemic, it is also time to let kids play again while continuing to follow public health recommendations.

According to the [2020 ParticipACTION Report Card for Children and Youth](#), families play a crucial role in influencing kids' physical activity. Here is how you can help your children:

- Be an active role model
- Prioritize active transportation (e.g. walking, cycling, wheeling)
- Create a family media plan that includes screen-free times
- Encourage more outdoor time

Please remember to follow COVID-19 Public Health guidelines.

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# AFTER-SCHOOL — TIME TO GET ACTIVE!

Children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily to live healthier, happier lives, yet many spend just 14 minutes a day doing heart-pumping activities after-school. Most children spend their after-school time sitting, playing video or computer games, watching television or reading.

Here are some tips to get your kids active after school:

- Get outside with your kids
- Use active modes of travel, such as walking and cycling, as much as possible
- Restrict television viewing and video/computer games during the after-school period
- Encourage your child to participate in sports or intramural activities after school while following COVID-19 Public Health guidelines
- Search for available in-person or virtual programs at your local municipal recreation department
- Help your child find activities that they enjoy and best suit their abilities



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# WANT AN ACTIVE CHILD? BE AN ACTIVE PARENT

Parents who are physically active are more likely to have active children. Children watch and learn much more from what you do than from what you say. Parents are their children's number-one role models.

It's time to get up and get active with your children!

Here are some tips for planning physical activity together:

- Go for a daily walk, jog or bike ride around the neighbourhood
- Learn a new sport together, such as tennis or basketball
- Play with your children: enjoy a game of hopscotch, skipping, tag or catch
- Leave the car at home and use active transportation (e.g. cycling, walking, rollerblading) as often as possible
- Limit screen time: No more than two hours of leisure screen time per day for school-aged children
- Ask children to help with chores around the house, such as raking leaves, vacuuming, walking the dog or carrying groceries



Please remember to follow all COVID-19 Public Health guidelines while being active.

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# OUTDOOR FREE TIME



When children and youth are outside, they move more, get curious, and find joy. Interacting with nature has cognitive benefits. It helps restore our ability to concentrate and pay attention. It improves mood, focus, stress response.

Outdoor free time activities can include: developing the ability to use speed (run); use tools (build and construct); be near elements of nature (in the woods); rough-and-tumble play (wrestle); try different heights (climb a tree); and be free in their surroundings (play tag).

## Benefits of increasing outdoor free time for children and youth:

- Gives them a place to make independent decisions and listen to their inner voice
- Promotes testing their own capabilities and finding their own limits
- Offers creative and physical challenges to develop confidence
- Gives freedom to socialize while doing an fun activity

## How can you support more outdoor free time?

- Listen to this [Active for Life parent podcast](#) and get expert tips about how to give attention, check in and, intervene when children are outdoors
- Use [Outside Play parent resources](#) to discover and work through concerns related to giving time, space, and freedom to be active outdoors
- Get comfortable with allowing children to follow their own ideas without a defined purpose or outcome
- Watch and observe when children are happiest outdoors. They will let you know how amazing they are!

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# FAMILY TIME OUTDOORS

Here are some tips to get “out that door” as a family and enjoy! Being outdoors in nature strengthens your mental and physical health. This is beneficial for all ages. All movement throughout the day contributes to your daily physical activity requirements – a short walk, or day out, it all adds up.



## Keep outings fun and enjoyable:

- Start with 10 mins outdoors nearby. Make it easy!
- Check out [forests](#), paths and trails in York Region
- Have you tried [orienteering](#)? Join a club and pack your trail map and compass
- Try [geocaching](#) and join the world's largest outdoor treasure hunt
- Cycling, hiking and walking trails and routes are available for the [121-kilometre Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail](#)

## Create memories and enjoy the simple moments nature gives us:

- Join in the fun with children. Adults benefit from outdoor playtime too.
- Notice when you're present and in the moment.
- Listen to the birds, look up for rainbows or stars, appreciate all your senses in nature
- Be curious about natural landscapes, insects, flowers, watersheds, tree stumps
- Get creative inspiration from nature – from trees to bees, see design and color
- Ask each other how you feel after getting fresh air and being active?

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