

# Lifestyle Tips



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## Getting active after school

Did you know that what your kids do after school can affect what they do at school? Research shows that regular physical activity contributes to better academic scores, improves concentration and connectedness to school, and protects against negative behaviours such as bullying. Unfortunately, only 31% of children and youth are active enough to achieve the Canadian physical activity guidelines of 60 minutes per day.

The after-school period is often a sedentary time for kids, as their parents may tend to keep them indoors in a safe place instead of running around outside. An active child should be getting physical activity at home, at school and in the community. And there are plenty of ways that you can encourage your kids to get more physical activity into the hours after school.

### Make time for play

Free, unstructured play is fun, but it's not frivolous! For kids, active play is



actually required for optimal growth and development. Kids need time to run around, explore, build, imagine and let loose with their friends and family members. If you cannot be there to watch your kids at play,

share duties with a neighbour, or encourage your child's caregiver to supervise your child and some friends as they run free, jump and move around.



### Turn off the TV

Our kids spend way too much sedentary time in front of televisions, DVDs, video games and computers. Children and youth should be getting no more than two hours of screen time per day. For preschoolers, the

recommendation is less than one hour, and for toddlers under two, the recommendation is zero screen time. Make some house rules about screen time in the after-school period and stick to them.

### Bike, stroll or roll

Active transportation is one of the easiest ways to get more activity into a child's day. So, walk or cycle your kids to and from school, or encourage your child's caregiver or daycare to do the same.



### Get organized

Schools, municipal recreation departments, local sport organizations, YMCA/YWCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada offer budget-friendly after-school programs in communities across the country. Some are sport or physical-activity focused, but even at an art or music program, your child will benefit from some time to be active and get moving.

For more information on after-school programs in your area, please visit:

YMCA: <http://www.ymca.ca/>

YWCA: <http://ywcacanada.ca/en>

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada:  
<http://www.bgccan.com/index.asp>

Or check out your local community centre or school board for programming close to you.