

# Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

2011 SCIENTIFIC STATEMENTS

FOR YOUTH - 12 – 17 YEARS

## Preamble

These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy youth (12-17 years), irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status of the family. Youth are encouraged to participate in a variety of physical activities that support their natural development and are enjoyable and safe.

Youth should be physically active daily as part of play, games, sports, transportation, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of family, school and community (e.g. volunteer, employment) activities. This should be achieved above and beyond the incidental physical activities accumulated in the course of daily living.

Following these physical activity guidelines can improve cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body composition, bone density, cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness, and aspects of mental health. The potential benefits far exceed the potential risks associated with physical activity.

These guidelines may be appropriate for youth with a disability or medical condition; however, their parents or caregiver should consult a health professional to understand the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them.

For those who are physically inactive, doing amounts below the recommended levels can provide some health benefits. For these youth, it is appropriate to start with smaller amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity as a stepping stone to meeting the guidelines.

For guidance on decreasing sedentary behaviour please refer to Canada's Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children and Youth.

## Guidelines

- For health benefits, youth aged 12-17 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. This should include:
  - Vigorous-intensity activities at least 3 days per week.
  - Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week.
- More daily physical activity provides greater health benefits.