

# Handbook for

CANADA'S

# Physical Activity Guide

to Healthy Active Living



*Includes pull-out copy of the Guide*



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada



Canadian Society for  
Exercise Physiology



Physical activity improves health.

Every little bit counts,

but more is even better -

everyone can do it!

## What is *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*?

It is a *Guide* to help you make wise choices about physical activity. Choices that will improve your health, help prevent disease, and allow you to get the most out of life.

The *Guide* is the pull-out section in the two centre pages of this *Handbook*. It provides a rainbow of physical activities that can help you have more energy, move more easily, and get stronger. It tells you how much activity you should strive for and how to get started. It also lists the many benefits of physical activity and the health risks of inactivity. This *Handbook* provides additional information to help you make the best use of the *Guide*.

## Using this *Handbook*

Improving your health through physical activity is easier than you think. You will gain significant health benefits just by adding physical activity to your daily routine. Your benefits will increase as you add more activities to your day. The best news of all is that physical activity doesn't have to be very hard to improve your health!

This *Handbook* has been designed to help you get started. It tells you why physical activity is important for your health, and the problems you could experience if you are inactive. It gives you lots of examples to help you choose physical activity that's right for you. It will help you to build physical activity into your routines at home, at school, at work, at play and on the way. It shows you how you can start slowly and build up so that active living becomes as natural as brushing your teeth or putting on your seat belt.

No matter what you are doing now, there are tips to help you become more active, enjoy better health and get the most out of life. There are examples of people just like you, who are working to get moving and improve their health through regular physical activity.

Just by reading this *Handbook*, you are taking the first step to a more active and healthier lifestyle.



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Get active your way –  
build physical activity  
into your daily life...

- at home
- at school
- at work
- at play
- on the way

...that's  
active living!

Physical Activity Guide centerfold pull-out





## Why Physical Activity is Important for You

People need to be active to be healthy. Our modern lifestyle and all the conveniences we've become used to have made us sedentary – and that's dangerous for our health. Sitting around in front of the TV or the computer, riding in the car for even a short trip to the store and using elevators instead of stairs or ramps all contribute to our inactivity. Physical inactivity is as dangerous to our health as smoking!

*Add up your activities during the day in periods of at least 10 minutes each. Start slowly...and build up! If you're already doing some light activities, move up to more moderate ones. A little is good, but more is better, if you want to achieve health benefits.*

### Benefits of regular activity:

- better health
- improved fitness
- better posture and balance
- better self-esteem
- weight control
- stronger muscles and bones
- feeling more energetic
- relaxation and reduced stress
- continued independent living in later life

### Health risks of inactivity:

- premature death
- heart disease
- obesity
- high blood pressure
- adult-onset diabetes
- osteoporosis
- stroke
- depression
- colon cancer

*Consider adding activity - more time, more effort, more often. If you are already regularly active, you can still benefit by adding activity. Generally, the more active you are, the more benefits you will get.*

## What's the goal?

Scientists say accumulate 60 minutes of physical activity every day to stay healthy or improve your health. Time needed depends on effort – as you progress to moderate activities, you can cut down to 30 minutes, 4 days a week.

Physical activity doesn't have to be very hard to improve your health. This goal can be reached by building physical activities into your daily routine. Just add it up in periods of at least 10 minutes each throughout the day. After three months of regular physical activity, you will notice a difference – people often say getting started is the hardest part. This *Handbook* will show you how easy it can be!

**Time needed depends on effort**

| Very Light Effort   | Light Effort<br><i>60 minutes</i>   | Moderate Effort<br><i>30-60 minutes</i>   | Vigorous Effort<br><i>20-30 minutes</i>  | Maximum Effort  |
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| <p><i>How does it feel?</i><br/><i>How warm am I? What is my breathing like?</i></p>                      |   |   |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change from rest state</li> <li>• Normal breathing</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting to feel warm</li> <li>• Slight increase in breathing rate</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warmer</li> <li>• Greater increase in breathing rate</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quite warm</li> <li>• More out of breath</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very hot/perspiring heavily</li> <li>• Completely out of breath</li> </ul> |
| <b>Range needed to stay healthy</b>   |   |   |  |   |



# What do the experts say I have to do?

There are three types of activities you need to do to keep your body healthy: endurance activities, flexibility activities, and strength activities. Do a variety from each group to get the most health benefits. The *Guide* offers you a rainbow of activities to choose from, so tear out the *Guide* from the centre of this *Handbook* now so you can follow along as you read further.

Take a look and see what activities appeal to you. Choosing things you like to do is one of the best ways to build regular physical activity into your life. Check out more examples later in this *Handbook*.

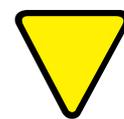
## The Three Activity Groups

### 1. Endurance Activities: (4-7 days a week)

Endurance activities help your heart, lungs and circulatory system stay healthy and give you more energy. They range from walking and household chores to organized exercise programs and recreational sports.

Here are some examples to get you thinking about how to increase your endurance activities:

- walking
- golfing (without a ride-on cart)
- yard and garden work
- propelling a wheelchair (“wheeling”)
- cycling
- skating
- continuous swimming
- tennis
- dancing



### Playing It Safe

For endurance

activities, begin with light activities and progress to moderate and vigorous activities later, if you like. (This will prevent or minimize any muscle soreness you might experience when you are starting out.)

- Use comfortable footwear that provides good cushioning and support.
- Wear comfortable clothing that suits your activity – and the weather!
- Wear safety gear approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) whenever appropriate (e.g., a helmet for cycling and in-line skating, along with knee, elbow and wrist protectors; protective eye goggles for squash).



## Safe Stretching

Start with five

minutes of light activity (easy walking, etc.) beforehand, or do your stretching after your endurance or strength activity.

- Stretch slowly and smoothly without bouncing or jerking. Use gentle, continuous movement or stretch-and-hold (for 10-30 seconds) whichever is right for the exercise.
- Aim for a stretched, relaxed feeling – avoid pain, don't hold your breath, and breathe in a natural rhythm.
- Seek help from a fitness professional or get a good book on stretching if you're not sure what to do.

## 2. Flexibility Activities: (4-7 days a week)

Flexibility activities help you to move easily, keeping your muscles relaxed and your joints mobile. Regular flexibility activities can help you to live better, longer, so that your quality of life and independence are maintained as you get older. Flexibility activities include gentle reaching, bending, and stretching of all your muscle groups.

Here are some ideas to help you increase your flexibility activities:

- gardening
- mopping the floor
- yard work
- vacuuming
- stretching exercises
- T'ai Chi
- golf
- bowling
- yoga
- curling
- dance



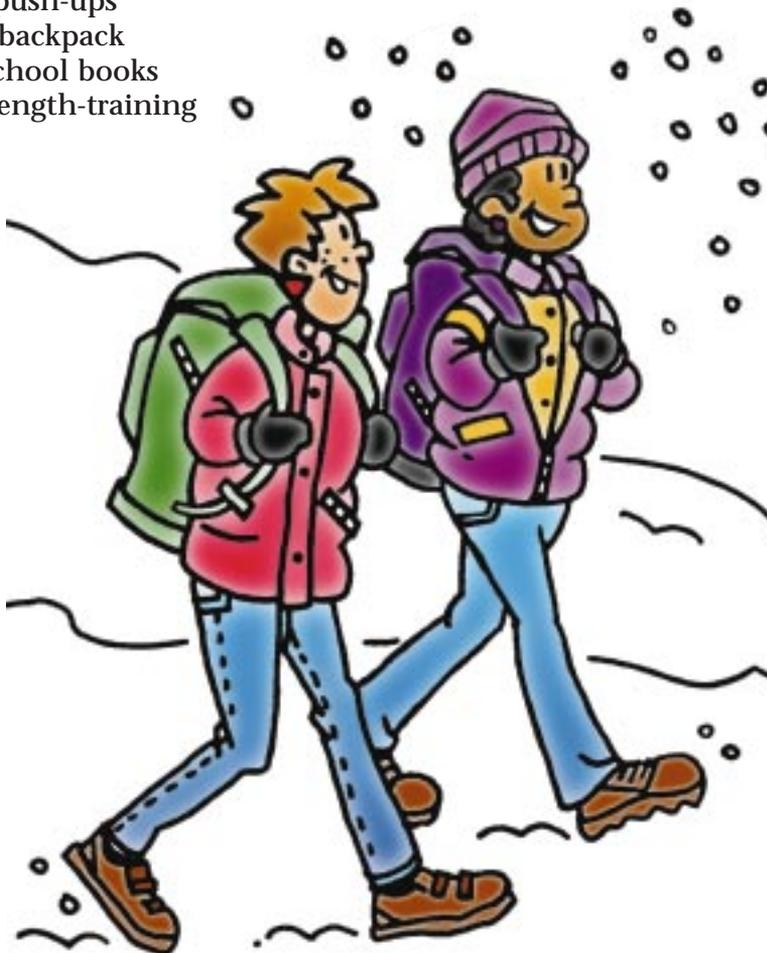
### 3. Strength Activities: (2-4 days a week)

Strength activities help your muscles and bones stay strong, improve your posture and help to prevent diseases like osteoporosis. Strength activities are those that make you work your muscles against some kind of resistance, like when you push or pull hard to open a heavy door.

To ensure good overall strength, try to do a combination of activities that exercise the muscles in your arms, mid-section, and legs. Strive for a good balance – upper body and lower body, right and left sides, and opposing muscle groups (e.g., both the front and back of the upper arm).

Here are some ideas to increase your strength activities:

- heavy yard work, such as cutting and piling wood
- raking and carrying leaves
- lifting and carrying groceries (not to mention infants and toddlers!)
- climbing stairs
- exercises like abdominal curls and push-ups
- wearing a backpack carrying school books
- weight/strength-training routines



#### Safe Strength Training

Start with five minutes of light endurance activity and stretching at the beginning of each session.

- Learn proper technique to protect your back and joints from undue stress.
- Use light weights and high repetitions (2-4 sets of 10-15 repetitions of each exercise).
- Breathe regularly when doing an exercise – don't hold your breath!
- Rest for at least one day between strength-training sessions.
- Get help from an experienced leader or consult a reputable book for more information.





# How Do I Know if I'm Doing Enough Physical Activity to Stay Healthy?

If you are not sure, you're probably doing activities in the light to moderate range on the chart below. You need to work towards adding up 60 minutes of activities a day in periods of at least 10 minutes each. It's really pretty easy. Remember, every little bit counts!



20 minutes +

Let's take a look at a typical day in the life of some average Canadians—just like you—who have chosen to build physical activity into their daily routines. You'll see it's easy – and you can find the time even if you are busy.



10 minutes +

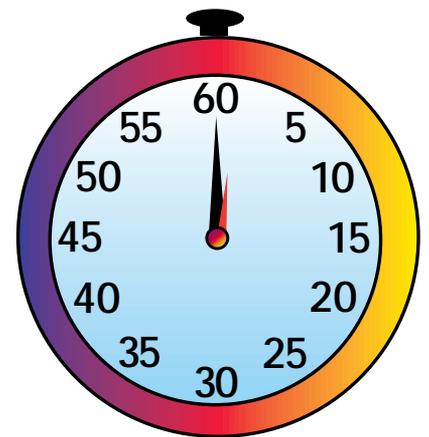
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| Range needed to stay healthy   |   |   |  |   |



20 minutes +



10 minutes



= 60 minutes

A year ago, none of the following people were doing enough physical activity to stay healthy. Later in this *Handbook* you'll see how they got started. This may give you some ideas about how you could start to build physical activity into your daily routine.

## Here's What People Like You Are Doing Now

### *Meet Pierre (age 55)*

He gets up at seven, eats a healthy breakfast and walks to the bus (10 minutes).

At noon, he meets his friend Sue and most days they walk before lunch ... (10 minutes). Before heading back to the office – another 10 minute walk – they do a few stretches to help them stay relaxed through the afternoon.

After work he walks back home from the bus (10 minutes). His walk home is at a brisk pace so that he feels a noticeable increase in his breathing. He enjoys the feeling that this increase in effort gives him.

After dinner he usually does some type of physical activity like walking, skating or swimming at the community recreation centre with his wife, which gets her moving as well (20 minutes). There's 60 minutes and he hardly even noticed!





## *Introducing Rashida (age 30)*

She stays home with her daughter who's four and her son who's two. Running after them keeps her busy, but she also builds activity time into her day. She got started by changing the TV channel to exercise programs and participating in those exercises she felt comfortable doing.

Most mornings now, she follows half an exercise program on TV (10 minutes), and then she puts on music and dances with her children for at least another 10 minutes. Sometimes she does the exercises or dancing with the children's shows on TV.

After lunch she walks to the park with the children, and pushes them on the swings (20 minutes).

After dinner she and her husband romp with the kids before story-time and bed (20 minutes). It was easy for her to get her 60 minutes in while entertaining the kids too!



## Here's Jacqueline (age 40)

She's a single mum and does shift work on a full-time basis, which makes for an irregular and hectic schedule. She had to plan to get physical activity into her life and she had very little money. Here's what she does:

She gets off the bus two stops before her workplace and walks the rest of the way (20 minutes). At work she takes the stairs instead of the elevator most of the time.

She also does easy stretching exercises like rolling her shoulders and stretching her neck during her coffee breaks. She also works her stomach muscles on the bus by tightening them, and working her back muscles by pushing the small of her back into the seat back, doing each for 30 seconds at a time. After only a short time, she felt it working and is now beginning to see an improvement in her posture.

Depending on her shift, she usually walks to the park or in-line skates with her children for 20 minutes or so, at some point in the day. When she misses a day during the week, she spends a little extra time being physically active on the weekends.

Housework like vacuuming or washing the floor makes up the rest of her 60 minutes. Sometimes she only gets in 30 minutes, but she knows that's OK too.

Physical activity doesn't have to be hard to improve your health.





Physical activity can help you live better, longer, so that your quality of life and independence are maintained as you get older.

## *Say hello to Joshua and his friend Maria (ages 55+)*

They are both retired. Joshua had a heart attack and Maria has arthritis, but they needed to put physical activity back in their lives. Their doctors suggested walking would be good for both of them, so they thought about giving it a try together. Here's what they do now.

In the morning they usually walk in the park for 20 minutes. In the winter, they go to the mall and walk there, making sure to walk up the stairs to the second level whenever possible. They use elevators a lot less now than they used to.

In the afternoon, they go to their local Y and join in physical activity periods with other seniors for about 30 minutes. Maria really likes the line dancing even though her arthritis prevents her from doing all the steps. Joshua likes to lift light weights and encourages Maria to do it with him for a bit -- sometimes she does it for 10 minutes. Sometimes they do T'ai Chi together.

Household chores help make up the rest of their 60 minutes of physical activity each day.



## Meet Michel (age 25)

Michel is into computers in a big way. It seems that if he's not working on his computer, he is playing computer games, but now he makes sure to build physical activity into his day. And he doesn't let the fact that he is using a wheelchair get in his way.

He's lucky – his company has a fitness facility, so he goes there once a day to lift weights or 'wheel' on the indoor running track. This usually takes about 30 minutes of his work day. A few days a week he plays pick up basketball after work with his friends.

He is achieving the physical activity goals he set for himself and now knows that being in a wheelchair and being a "computer geek" doesn't have to mean being physically inactive. What's more, he still has plenty of time for his computer and he has rediscovered some of life's other enjoyments!



CANADA'S

# Physical Activity Guide

to Healthy Active Living

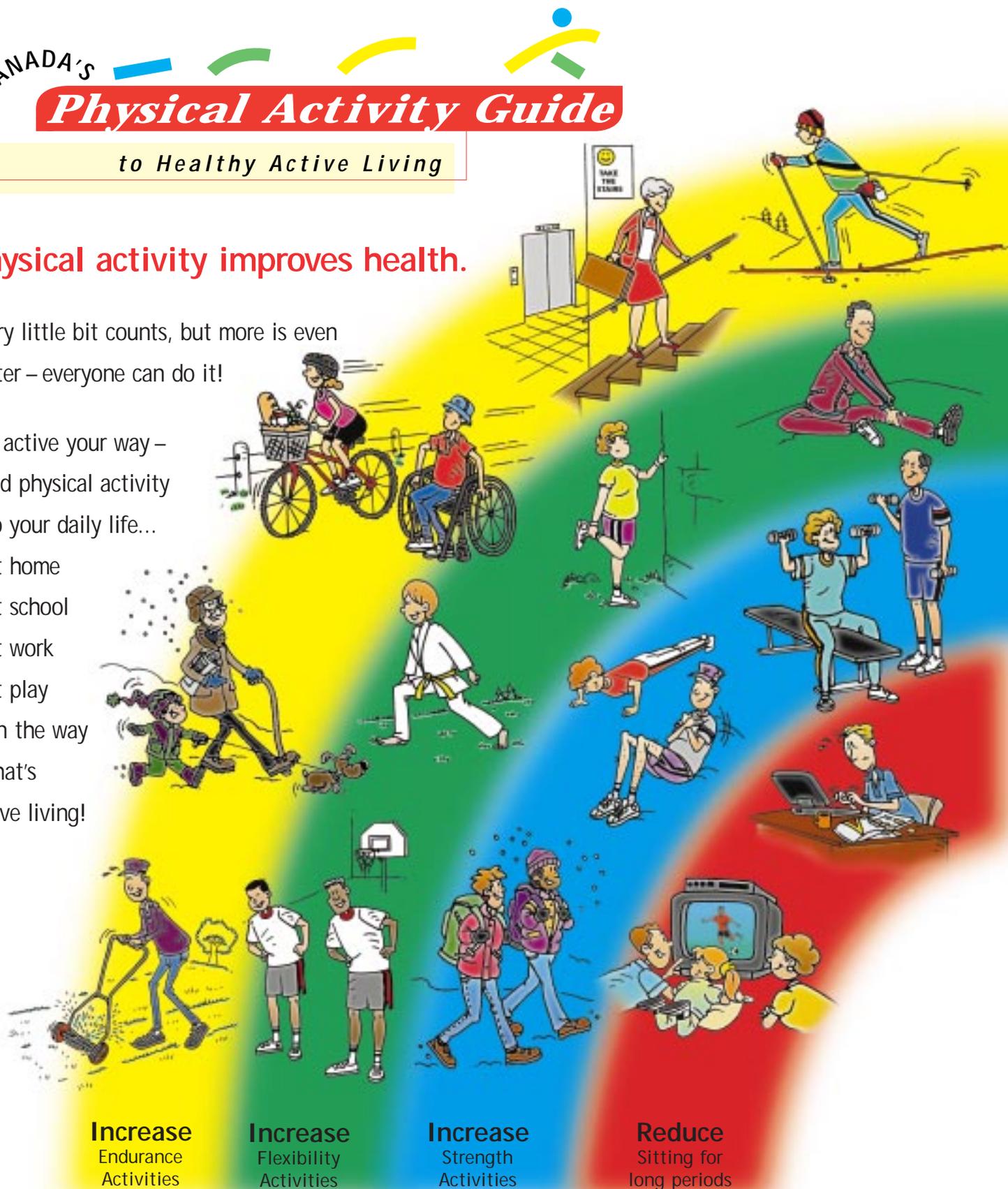
## Physical activity improves health.

Every little bit counts, but more is even better – everyone can do it!

Get active your way – build physical activity into your daily life...

- at home
- at school
- at work
- at play
- on the way

...that's active living!



**Increase**  
Endurance  
Activities

**Increase**  
Flexibility  
Activities

**Increase**  
Strength  
Activities

**Reduce**  
Sitting for  
long periods



Health Canada  
Santé Canada



Canadian Society for  
Exercise Physiology

Choose a variety of activities from these three groups:

### Endurance

4-7 days a week

Continuous activities for your heart, lungs and circulatory system.

### Flexibility

4-7 days a week

Gentle reaching, bending and stretching activities to keep your muscles relaxed and joints mobile.

### Strength

2-4 days a week

Activities against resistance to strengthen muscles and bones and improve posture.

Starting slowly is very safe for most people. Not sure? Consult your health professional.

For a copy of the *Guide Handbook* and more information: 1-888-334-9769, or [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

Eating well is also important. Follow *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to make wise food choices.

## Get Active Your Way, Every Day—For Life!

Scientists say accumulate 60 minutes of physical activity every day to stay healthy or improve your health. As you progress to moderate activities you can cut down to 30 minutes, 4 days a week. Add-up your activities in periods of at least 10 minutes each. Start slowly... and build up.

| Time needed depends on effort  |   |   |  |   |
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| Range needed to stay healthy   |   |   |  |   |

### You Can Do It – Getting started is easier than you think

Physical activity doesn't have to be very hard. Build physical activities into your daily routine.

- Walk whenever you can – get off the bus early, use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Reduce inactivity for long periods, like watching TV.
- Get up from the couch and stretch and bend for a few minutes every hour.
- Play actively with your kids.
- Choose to walk, wheel or cycle for short trips.
- Start with a 10 minute walk – gradually increase the time.
- Find out about walking and cycling paths nearby and use them.
- Observe a physical activity class to see if you want to try it.
- Try one class to start – you don't have to make a long-term commitment.
- Do the activities you are doing now, more often.

### Benefits of regular activity:

- better health
- improved fitness
- better posture and balance
- better self-esteem
- weight control
- stronger muscles and bones
- feeling more energetic
- relaxation and reduced stress
- continued independent living in later life

### Health risks of inactivity:

- premature death
- heart disease
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CANADA'S

# Physical Activity Guide

to Healthy Active Living



## Get Active Your Way, Every Day

You Can Do It – Getting started is easy

### Sunday

### Monday

### Tuesday

### Wednesday



# Every Day – For Life!



Easier than you think. Keep track of your activities. Record your progress.

## Thursday

## Friday

## Saturday





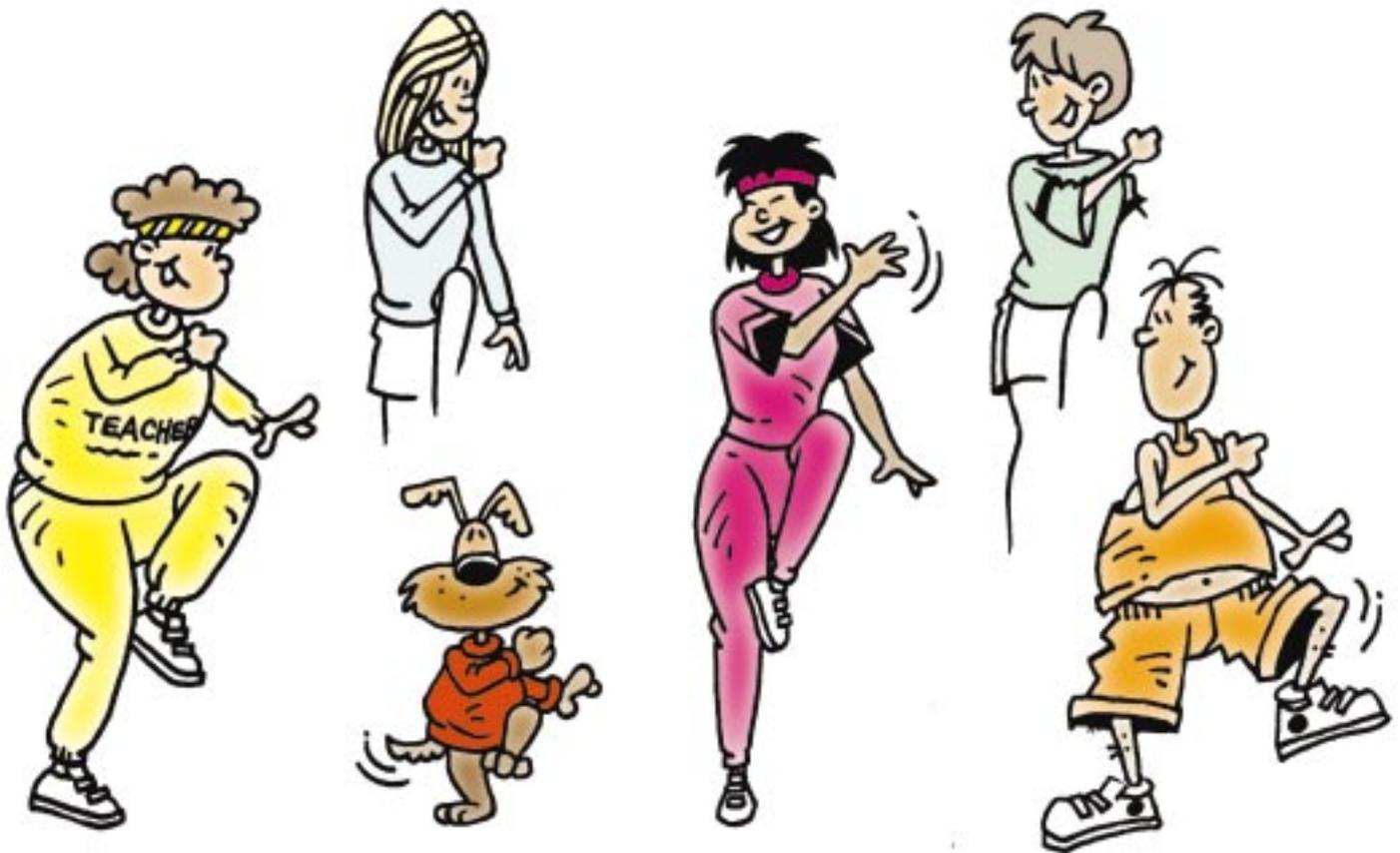
## *This is Madeleine (age 17)*

She's been inactive all her life until now. Here's how she turned things around and became active:

She always liked dancing so she started going three times a week to a dance aerobics class her Phys. Ed. teacher started at school (30 minutes). In fact, now she goes dancing with her friends on the weekends, which she never did before. As well, she started to feel better and even her grades went up.

Once a week she goes to yoga at the community centre for an hour and each day she does yoga exercises for about 20 minutes while watching TV – still her favourite pastime!

She never takes the family car anymore when she runs to the drug store or the market – she walks, and most days she walks to school too, about 10 minutes each way. Madeleine is well on her way to active living – and you can do it too!



# Get Active Your Way Every Day – For Life! It's Easier Than You Think!

## You can do it – here's why

Did you know that 63% of Canadians – just like you – are not active enough to achieve the health benefits they need from physical activity?

Your body is designed to move and it's surprising how little time it takes to stay healthy and reduce the risk of disease if you are physically active, regularly.

Consider this: you're awake about 15-19 hours a day, but you only have to be active for ONE HOUR and that 60 minutes of activity doesn't have to be done all at once. You can add up your activities, 10 minutes at a time, to get that daily total.

It's easy to take a first step and that counts as progress when you're getting started!

Add up your activities during the day in periods of at least 10 minutes each. Start slowly...and build up! If you are already doing some light activities, move up to more moderate ones. A little is good, but more is even better, if you want to achieve health benefits.

## Here's How The People You Met Earlier Took Their First Steps

Check out how Pierre, Rashida, Jacqueline, Joshua, Maria, Michel and Madeleine did it and then think about your own plan, starting with that important first step. Remember, the first step is easier than you think and it really is progress. Jot down some ideas of your own in the space provided or tick off the things in their plans that might apply to you.

### *How did Pierre get started?*

Pierre was 55 years old when he decided to put physical activity back in his life.

Just like all of us, he was very busy, had too little time for himself, had no energy and little motivation. He had been into sports when he was young, but his life had become too complicated for organized activities...and anyway there was no time. He didn't have enough money to invest in a health club either. He knew that he needed to exercise – his doctor had told him so on many occasions – but he just didn't get around to doing it.



Jot down some ideas on how you can take your first steps:

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One day, he was talking to a friend who told him that a mutual acquaintance had just died of a heart attack at 56. That’s me, thought Pierre, I’ll be next. That day, he decided he had better do something. But what? Here’s what he did.

*Today is the first day of the rest of my life. I’m going to walk to the bus every day – that’s 10 minutes. Next week I might decide to do more.*

He went to his doctor for a check-up and asked him if he could help him get started. *This was Pierre’s first step.* The doctor asked him what he wanted to do. Pierre laughed and said, “Nothing Doc, but I think I’d better do something!” The doctor gave him a brochure from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the *Handbook for Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* to get him on the right track.



Pierre went home and discovered that he could build activity into his daily life at work, at home, on the way, and he didn’t have to join something. He put a simple plan together that he could fit into his day and posted it on the fridge. It simply read:

*Today is the first day of the rest of my life. I’m going to walk to the bus every day – that’s 10 minutes. Next week I might decide to do more.*

Every step that Pierre took was progress. He thought about it, asked for advice, read information and reminded himself to try. After one month he walked 10 minutes most days of the week.

Now Pierre does 60 minutes of physical activity most days and, not only that, his family is more active too, because they keep reading his fridge notes!

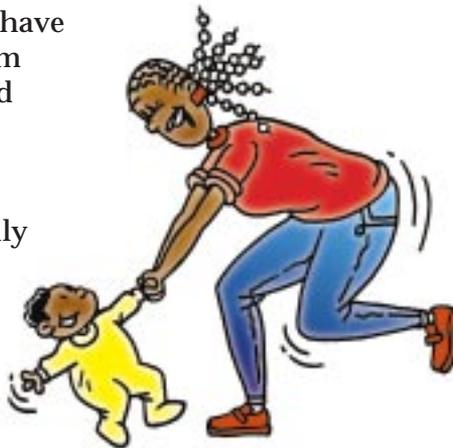
### ***How did Rashida get started?***

You remember, she’s a stay-at-home mum with kids aged two and four. You probably think that she already had enough exercise chasing them around, but actually, she spent a lot of time on the couch watching them play or watching TV. She felt sluggish and she had no energy and she certainly had no plans to get active.

One day her Mom phoned and told her she’d been diagnosed with osteoporosis and that her doctor said it runs in families. Her Mom had just read some brochures from the Osteoporosis Society and found out that exercise helps to prevent the disease. She wanted her daughter to do something now. Sure Mom, said Rashida, but she had no intentions of doing anything – after all, she was too tired from looking after the children. But her mother’s words kept playing on her mind...

One day at the community centre she picked up a brochure about helping your children to grow up physically active and healthy.

*Reading it was her first step.* She discovered all kinds of fun things she could do with her children that would also get her active. Who would have guessed that dancing in the living room counted, she thought. Rashida realized just how much time she spent sitting around.



You can do it...

Getting started is easier  
than you think.

Rashida discovered that being physically active with her children was fun and after a few months she added more activities to her list of things to do. She spent less time sitting and more time moving. Now she's got it all worked out and her kids love dancing with her. She's even got her husband into the game and the whole family is making active living a way of life. Soon her friends began doing it too! Now, instead of having coffee and cookies while they watch their children play, the moms on her block meet at the local community centre for an exercise class, while their kids go to play group.

### *How did Jacqueline get started?*

At 40, Jacqueline could barely keep up with work and the kids. Being a single parent was tough – no money, no time, no energy. She had seen the ParticipACTION ads on TV, but who had the time or money for that stuff – certainly not her! She watched TV to relax from the stress of work, but always woke up feeling tired the next day. What was she to do?

One day her daughter looked at her and said, “You know Mum, in school today, we learned that you have to be physically active to stay healthy. You don't do anything. I think you should start because what will happen to us if you get sick?” Jacqueline's heart skipped a beat. She hadn't thought about it that way. But there was still the problem of no time and no money... even so, the kids didn't let up on her. Some weeks later, Jacqueline found herself in the counselling office at work, and asked if they had any information. *Her first step* was to pick up a few brochures and begin looking into physical activity and health. She chose one activity to start – she started walking with her children, after all, they were the ones who were concerned about her in the first place.





Remember, getting health benefits through physical activity only takes **ONE HOUR** out of the 24 hours in your day. And it can be added-up in periods of at least 10 minutes each.

After several months, she also started walking to work. She still feels tired from the stress of balancing work and home, but she handles it better and now wakes up refreshed. She's into active living and her children are as happy as she is with her new lifestyle. Why all the fuss about 60 minutes, she wonders today, but when she started out, she really thought it would be impossible.

### *How did Joshua and Maria get started?*

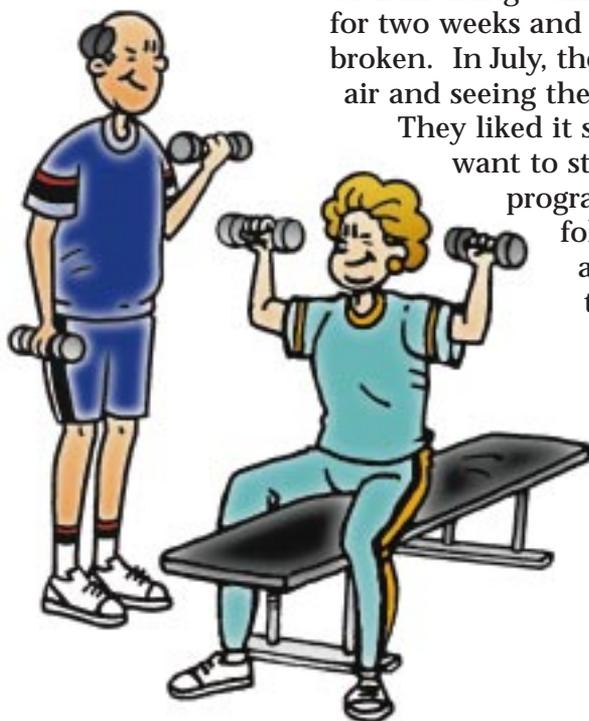
Well, Joshua had a mild heart attack at 60. His doctor told him he must start walking or he would have another one. He had a big scare, but the idea of walking every day appalled him. What should he do?

His friend Maria hardly got out of the house. Maybe they could do it together, he thought. At least he would have company. Maria thought he had gone crazy – I have enough trouble just walking around the house, she laughed. But her chiropractor had told her to walk as well. After joking about it for several weeks, the two of them decided they would do something. *Deciding to try was their first step.*

So they made a plan. They would start to walk when the weather got nice. By May 15, they had no more excuses, so they started their morning walks. In early June, Maria went to visit her daughter for two weeks and they both stopped walking – the habit was broken. In July, they tried again. It got them outside into the fresh air and seeing the neighbours and they really began to enjoy it.

They liked it so much that when winter came, they didn't want to stop. Then they heard about a mall-walking program and joined that too. They met some more folks their age and found out about the seniors' activity program at the local Y and checked that out next.

Today, they are both doing at least 45 minutes of activity a day – and some days it's more than 60. They say they never thought it was possible for them to be physically active, but now it's one of the most important and enjoyable things in their lives.



## How did Michel get started?

At 25, Michel has used a wheelchair for most of his life. Because of his passion for computers, he tended to spend hours-on-end in front of his computer. He was beginning to feel aches and pains in his upper body as a result of these prolonged periods of inactivity. It never occurred to him that being physically active was within his reach, or that the time he spent in front of the computer was adding to his already sedentary lifestyle. He knew his company had a gym, but was unaware that it could meet his additional needs.

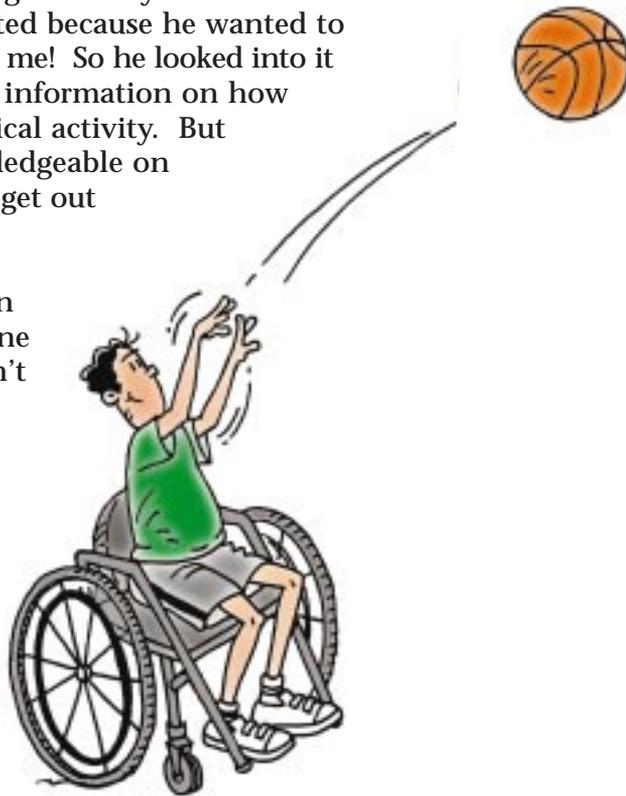
One day he was 'surfing' the Internet and he landed on a site about the inactivity problems typical of computer users. He found that sedentary living is as dangerous to your health as smoking – a habit he had never started because he wanted to be healthy. Oops, he thought. That's me! So he looked into it further, roaming the Net looking for information on how to improve his health through physical activity. But even though he became quite knowledgeable on the subject, he still couldn't seem to get out from behind that computer!

Then one day, he found an article on the Internet that advised, "Just do one small thing to get you moving – don't try to make a grand plan right off the bat." It also said, "Whatever your situation or ability, you can try a variety of activities to improve your health and get a feel for what's right for you."

*That day, he made his first move.*

He wheeled himself into his company's gym, met with the fitness coordinator and he's on his way to healthy active living.

He found out that many facilities are accessible and that he can be active alongside his co-workers. He now feels more energetic and alert and still has plenty of time for his computer! He also bookmarked the website about *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* to keep learning about being physically active.



Activate *Canada's Physical*

*Activity Guide* Website!

[www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)



Add up your activities during the day in periods of at least 10 minutes each. Start slowly... and build up! If you are already doing some light activities, move up to more moderate ones. A little is good, but more is even better, if you want to achieve health benefits.



## How did Madeleine get started?

Remember, Madeleine is 17 and had spent a lot of time sitting around – a “couch potato”. She skipped Phys. Ed. in school, always felt clumsy and uncoordinated when she had to do physical activities with others and preferred reading or watching TV to intramural sports or being active outdoors.

Her friends kept trying to get her to join them in physical activities both during and after school, but she always said no. The more she sat on the couch, the more tired she became. She was overweight as well. How could she possibly put on tights and go to a gym class, she would ask herself.



Gradually her friends stopped asking her to do things with them and Madeleine sat on the couch even more. Her mom told her she needed exercise so she would have more energy. She told her to get out with her friends and swim, walk, bike or dance. One day her mom gave her a copy of the *Handbook for Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* and asked her to at least read it. Do something, she said. The only idea she liked was dancing...well, maybe I can, she thought.

*So she took her first step.* She talked to a friend at school. The friend told her that aerobic dance class was now being offered in Phys. Ed. and suggested she come and watch. “It’s fun,” her friend explained.

“And you like to dance, so you might decide to join us.” Madeleine thought about it. She was still pretty nervous, but her friend kept encouraging her. One day she finally went and just watched. She knew a few people in the class and they sure seemed to be having fun...

Eventually, she joined in and found to her surprise that she could follow all the steps. The teacher encouraged her and so she tried another class and then another... finally she decided to take the plunge and sign-up. She liked it! Another of her friends in the class also took yoga and encouraged her to come and watch that too – so she went and watched again. This time it did not take her so long to sign-up. In just over a year, Madeleine is now in two classes, goes out Saturday nights with her friends, is no longer a couch potato, feels a lot better about herself, and is even getting better grades at school.





## So what did you learn from these first steps and experiences?

- Every time you take a step you make progress.
- Planning to start is the first step for many people.
- Getting information is one step everyone can take.
- You don't need a grand plan to start.
- Congratulate yourself when you take a step.
- Getting started is easier than you think.
- Getting started can be reading about what to do, watching a class or other people to see how they do it, trying something, and getting ready to start.
- Watching a class helps you to decide if the activity is right for you.
- Try a class – many programs have free trials so you can try it without a big commitment.
- There are many ways to add physical activity to your life.
- You can start slowly and build up.
- Every little bit counts – you can add up your activities throughout the day.
- You can build physical activity into your life at home, at school, at work, at play and on the way.
- You do not have to have a lot of money to be physically active.
- You can choose activities that you like to do.
- Everyone can find enough time, if they decide to do it.
- You're never too young or too old to start living actively.
- People feel better when they are physically active.
- Physical activity can be a family thing, or you can do it on your own or with a friend.
- You can join an organized activity, or you can do something on your own, like take a walk in the park.
- The key is to take that first step and everybody's first step is different – remember each step counts as progress.
- It's easy to start. Even a call for information is a beginning and it counts as progress. Congratulate yourself – reading this *Handbook* is already a first step!



Take a minute to jot down one step that you could take now.

Check out the list on this page if you can't think of one and see if there is an idea there that you can use.

My first step:

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Date:

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## Here's a list of possible first steps you could take this week

Are you ready to take your first step? Make it easy:

- Get some information from your local YM/YWCA or community centre.
- Call the Parks and Recreation Department in your community.
- Talk to a health professional or a physical activity expert.





**Note:** If you have an illness that you think might prevent

you from becoming more active than you are now, check out the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire at the back of this *Handbook*.

- Talk to the counselling office at school or at work.
- Talk to friends who have built physical activity into their daily routines and ask them how they got started.
- Go to the library and borrow a book on physical activity and your health.
- Buy a pair of walking shoes.
- Check out what physical activity organizations exist in your community.
- Call your provincial/territorial Recreation Department.
- Check out the *Guide* Website at [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)
- Call 1-888-334-9769 for more information.
- Find out if a nearby mall has a walking route posted or a regular walking program.
- Make yourself a list of the reasons why you might want to introduce physical activity into your life.
- Make a list of the health problems you already have that physical activity might help to improve.
- Check out if there are walking paths in your community.
- Locate the parks in your community.
- Talk to a friend who might want to join you in your changing lifestyle so you can move forward together.
- Watch classes at your community centre that you might want to try.

### If you are active sometimes, but not enough to achieve the health benefits described in this *Handbook*:

- Walk whenever you can – get off the bus early, park the car further away or leave it at home, and use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Reduce inactivity for long periods, like watching TV or using the computer.
- Get up from the couch or your office chair and stretch and bend for a few minutes every hour.
- Start slowly, progress gradually.
- Start with a 10-minute walk—gradually increase the time.
- Take the stairs to go up one or two floors at work or on appointments.
- Choose to walk, wheel or cycle for short trips.
- Find out about walking and cycling paths nearby and use them.



- Observe a physical activity class to see if you want to try it.
- Try one class to start – you don't have to make a long-term commitment.
- Do the activities you are doing now, more often or with more effort.
- Check out the programs and services at the YM/YWCA or community recreation centre and see if anything interests you.
- Join a friend who is already active at the gym, on the tennis court or in the pool.



*Remember, all these steps count as progress – take one, then congratulate yourself, and take another!*

## Build Physical Activity Into Your Daily Life:

- at home
  - at school
  - at work
  - at play
  - on the way
- ...that's active living!



Here are some ideas to help you. Choose activities that interest and appeal to you. The best way to keep going, once you've taken that first step, is to do activities that are easy to fit in your schedule and could be fun at the same time.



Take a first step and put a checkmark beside the activities in the following list that you might like to incorporate into your daily routine. To get the health benefits you want from physical activity, you need to do it regularly, so pick the ones that you think you could realistically build into your daily life.





## Activities you can do at home

- Create a new morning routine. Start your day with 10 minutes of movement indoors or outdoors. Some stretching and a short walk first thing in the morning can be better than caffeine.
- Go for a bike ride.
- Trade in your power mower for a push mower.
- Park the car 10 minutes away from the store you are going to. Better yet, leave the car at home.
- If you live in a seniors' residence, start a hall-walking group. Add to your route each week and pick up friends along the way.
- Parents – play catch or fly a kite with your kids.
- Dance to your favourite up-beat music for 10 minutes a day.
- Do a physical activity routine with leaders on TV.

## Activities you can do at school



- Take an evening fitness class at your neighbourhood school, and encourage your friends to do the same.
- Support quality daily physical education at your child's school.
- Encourage teachers to talk about physical activity and active living.
- Create a walking school bus with other parents in your neighbourhood – instead of car-pooling, take turns walking the kids to school.
- Choose physical education as one of your courses.
- Get involved in intramural programs.

## Activities you can do at work



- Take stretch breaks during meetings.
- Have a “walking” meeting – grab your colleague and discuss business while taking a walk.
- Take the stairs. Pretend the elevator is out of service.
- Post a notice near the entrance to the stairway suggesting people take the stairs and have them sign it when they do to encourage others to follow their lead.
- Replace your coffee break with a walking/wheeling break.
- Contract your stomach and back muscles while sitting in your chair or on the bus.
- Take a brisk walk before lunch for about 10 minutes.
- Try to make active living one of the goals of your work team.
- Roll your shoulders and stretch your neck when sitting in front of the computer.



## Activities you can do at play

- Make a personal or family commitment to try a new activity each season: snowshoe, curl, hike, bike, dance, bowl, fish, camp, ice-skate, ski, swim, in-line skate, walk, run, skip rope, play tag with your kids, or play ball in the park.
- Join a club or organization that coordinates active living events.
- Participate in community programs like SummerActive and try some new activities.
- Get in the garden and dig, prune, rake and weed.
- See how many different 10-minute walking, wheeling or cycling routes you can find in your neighbourhood.
- Hit a tennis ball with a friend.
- Arrange to meet a couple of friends for a walk every day at the same time.
- Join a T'ai Chi or yoga class.
- Go line dancing, folk dancing, or square dancing.



## Activities you can do on the way

- Walk, cycle, in-line skate, or wheel to work or school.
- Get off the bus two stops early and walk home.
- Leave the car in a parking lot 10 minutes from work and walk the rest of the way.
- Take your bike to work – you'll save on gas as well as help to protect the environment and your health.
- If your job involves a lot of driving, plan several short stops in your day. Get out of the car and walk for 10 minutes or more whenever you can.



## Get Active Your Way, Every Day - For Life!

If you're still in doubt that physical activity is important to your health and you're not able to take the first step toward a healthier lifestyle, please read this *Handbook* again in a couple of months. Maybe then you will be ready to take your *first step*.

Remember what Pierre wrote on his fridge: *Today is the first day of the rest of my life*. It's the first day of the rest of your life too, and physical activity can help ensure you lead an independent, quality life even as you get older.

If you've made a plan, or decided how to get started, you have taken your first step – good for you!

Put *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* on your fridge to remind you of your commitment to your health. You can also turn it over and use the calendar on the back to keep track of your activities and record your progress.



Take a minute to jot down activities you can do:

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## The Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q)

Becoming more active is very safe for most people, but if you're in doubt, please complete the questionnaire below.

Some people should check with their doctor before they start becoming much more physically active. Start by answering the seven questions below. If you are between the ages of 15 and 69, the PAR-Q will tell you if you should check with your doctor before you start. If you are over 69 years of age, and are not used to being very active, definitely check with your doctor first.

**YES NO**

1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?

2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?

3. In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?

4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?

5. Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?

6. Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (for example, water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?

7. Do you know of any other reason why you should not do physical activity?

If you answered YES to one or more questions, talk with your doctor before you start becoming much more physically active.

If you answered NO to all questions, you can be reasonably sure that you can start becoming more physically active right now. Be sure to start slowly and progress gradually – this is the safest and easiest way to go.

### Delay becoming much more active if:

- You are not feeling well because of a temporary illness such as a cold or a fever – wait until you feel better; or
- You are or may be pregnant – talk to your doctor before you start becoming much more active.

**Note:** If your health changes so that you then answer YES to any of the above questions, ask for advice from your fitness or health professional.



## Putting It All Together – Support From Your Community

There's more to getting active than just making up your mind to do it. An active living community helps make active choices easy choices by:

- encouraging families to be active together;
- promoting physical education in schools and encouraging use of schools for community activities;
- promoting supportive physical activity policies in workplaces with things like showers, fitness facilities, flex-time and secure bike parking;
- promoting physical activity in community parks, facilities, play structures and special events; and
- sponsoring safe, active transportation through bike paths and lanes, well-lit walking trails, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods, and secure bike parking in association with local businesses.

Look for and ask about these things, which can often be found in your community.

## For More Information or Help to Take Your First Step...

Check out these contacts to find out more about physical activity for yourself and your family:

- your local recreation department to learn more about resources and activities in your community
- YMCA, YWCA, private fitness clubs, boy scouts and girl guides
- a certified fitness professional\* in your community
- your physician or another health professional
- a physical education teacher
- the coordinator of your workplace fitness/active living program, if you have one
- your community seniors' centre or association
- your local public health unit or department
- provincial health organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation
- a library or bookstore for reputable books and other active living resources (you can ask a fitness professional for suggestions)

\* Ask if the fitness professionals are certified through an organization like the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, your provincial fitness council or the YM/YWCA.

Call toll-free: 1-888-334-9769

Activate *Canada's Physical Activity Guide* Website:  
[www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

Physical activity is an investment in your health. Make it something you want to do, not something you have to do.

Get active your way, every day - for life!



*Think of minutes of physical activity as dollars in your health bank and make an investment in your health today.*



## Guide Endorsers

The following organizations have endorsed *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*:

- Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability
- Active Living Canada
- Active Living Coalition for Older Adults
- The Arthritis Society
- Asthma Society of Canada
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine
- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity
- The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Canadian Association for School Health
- Canadian Association of Principals
- Canadian Athletic Therapists Association
- Canadian Cancer Society
- The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety
- Canadian Centre for Stress and Well-Being
- Canadian Chiropractic Association
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute
- Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency
- Canadian Home and School Federation
- Canadian Institute of Child Health
- Canadian Institute of Planners
- Canadian Intramural Recreation Association
- Canadian Labour Congress
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Naturopathic Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Canadian Parks/Recreation Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Public Health Association
- Canadian Teachers Federation
- The College of Family Physicians of Canada
- Department of National Defense
- Dietitians of Canada
- Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Fitness, Recreation and Sport
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Girl Guides of Canada
- Go for Green
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
- Industrial Accident Prevention Association
- The Lung Association
- National Institute of Nutrition
- National Fitness Leadership Advisory Council
- Osteoporosis Society of Canada
- ParticipACTION
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Scouts Canada
- YMCA Canada
- YWCA of Canada

Call toll-free 1-888-334-9769

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