

Lifestyle Tips



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Safe and Active Routes to School



Our parents walked miles to school and it was uphill both ways. In contrast, many of today's children who live within

a reasonable distance of school do not walk or cycle there regularly—and it's only uphill one way. Almost 9 in 10 Canadian children are not active enough to meet Canada's guidelines for physical activity; however, children who walk or cycle to school are more

likely to meet the physical activity recommendations than those who get driven or take the bus to school. Using an active mode of transportation to get to and from school benefits the health and wellness of students and the community!



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Benefits

Increased Physical Activity: The benefits of increased physical activity are numerous. Physical activity plays a role in the prevention and risk management for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and metabolic syndrome in children and youth. In addition to health benefits, physical activity is also linked to improved academic achievement through better self-esteem, attention span and classroom behaviour.

Environment: Active transportation helps to reduce local carbon output, reducing hydrocarbon pollution to soil and groundwater of waterways nearby. Also, when most children are choosing active travel, schools can reduce guest parking and drop-off areas and could increase green space to allow for more natural water cycle absorption and improved air quality around schools.

Curriculum Connections: Provincial and territorial curriculums are responding to health and environmental concerns and increasing physical activity and environmental education in the curriculum.

Safety: Active transportation reduces traffic around the schools. Over time, reduced traffic will lead to a decrease in traffic-related injuries to children. In addition, building proper infrastructure

to increase active transportation increases safety for the whole nearby community—not only for students.

Reduced Costs: Increasing active transportation to and from school could save school boards money on bussing, reduce staff or volunteers required to monitor drop-off and pick-up zones and save money spent on fuel for parents.

Tips

If your child hasn't been regularly walking to school, here are a few tips to consider.

Shoes and clothing: Comfortable walking shoes will make to walk to and from school much easier. It is also important to dress for the weather. In the winter, be sure to wear a hat and mitts and have a waterproof coat and rain boots available for soggy days. Proper shoes and clothing not only make the walk to and from school easier, but can also encourage physical activity during recess or break time.

Backpack: A backpack with supportive straps will ease the stress of carrying books and other school supplies back and forth.

Drive part way and walk the rest: Many children live too far away to realistically walk or cycle to and from

school, but that doesn't mean they can't take people power part of the way. Try parking a few blocks from school and walking the rest.

Walking school bus: Parents are busy and may not have the time to walk their children to school every day. A walking school bus has adult volunteers escort small groups of children to and from school each day.

