

Lifestyle Tips



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How parents influence their kids' physical activity



“You’re just like your mother!” If anyone has ever heard that, it’s probably because it’s true—we tend to emulate our parents’ behaviour, whether we like it or not. Parents are the biggest single

source of influence in a child’s life, and parental support of healthy habits early on in a child’s life will pay a lifetime of dividends.

While it is an accepted practice that parents schedule time for homework, the same is not often done with scheduling active time with kids. Physical activity is very important at any age and

promotes physical, emotional, and social well-being. Parental support, which can take on many forms, is instrumental in increasing physical activity participation among kids and helping children grow up to be healthier adults. Whether it is scheduling active time together, being a spectator at your child’s sporting events, or

demonstrating your own commitment to regular exercise, it all adds up to an environment that produces more active kids.

Research indicates that children who receive greater parental support for physical activity and have parents who rate physical activity as enjoyable are more likely to be active at least 60 minutes per day¹. In a nation where 93% of our children are not active enough to meet the Canadian Physical Activity guidelines² and 26% are overweight or obese³, parental support is essential to help get our kids on the healthy track.

Here are some ways to show your support for your child's physical activity;

1. Be a healthy role model. Whether you notice it or not, your kids watch you and learn from your behaviour. Participate in active pursuits such as riding a bike, walking the dog, or walking to work to show your kids how easy and fun daily exercise can be.
2. Teach your kids that physical activity is fun rather than a chore. Pick favourite activities that your child wants to do, or try something new and adventurous!
3. Find ways to be active together as a family. Participate in family swims,

go for a weekend hike, or get involved in an active class together.

4. Don't plop down on the couch after work. Limit the amount of time you and your kids spend watching television or playing videogames. Schedule some active time together in the evening.
5. Be demonstrably supportive of your child's physical activity. Support can be anything from teaching them how to play a sport to motivating them to try new activities to showing up for games.
6. Listen to your child. Give kids the opportunity to try various activities and let them choose what they like to do and how they want to be active. Avoid making judgments about what your child may like because of their gender or age.
7. Praise your child when he or she is active. Your approval and encouragement is very important in helping them learn positive skills that will last throughout their lifetime.
8. Have fun! Keep it informal and free from stress by focusing on the positive benefits of being active rather than competition or body weight.

When you take steps to cultivate a positive place for physical activity every day, your influence will last your child's lifetime.

References

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