

Canada's first 'state of the nation' report on children's physical literacy

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The results from a large national research project led by the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) at the CHEO Research Institute shows that about two-thirds of Canadian children haven't achieved an acceptable level of physical literacy. Physical literacy is more than just fitness or motor skill; it includes the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

Fourteen articles that looked at different aspects of physical literacy and the Canadian Assessment of Physical Literacy (CAPL) were published today as a special supplement in the journal *BMC Public Health*. More than 10,000 [children](#), aged 8 to 12, from 11 cities across the country participated in the study from 2014 to 2017 through the CHEO Research Institute and research partners. Using the CAPL, children were assessed on a number of different areas, such as step counts and questions about daily activities.

The results demonstrate that more needs to be done to ensure Canadian children are physically literate. "We hear about increasing obesity rates in kids, falling rates of physical activity and more time spent in front of screens," said Dr. Mark Tremblay, Senior Scientist at the CHEO Research Institute, Director of HALO and Professor of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa. "Physical literacy looks at different domains in children to give a better overall picture of children's healthy active living and future health. Physically literate children are

more active and healthy children, which sets them up for life."

The HALO Research Group has been developing and refining the CAPL for the past 10 years. It's a robust tool that is valid, reliable and feasible and is being used across the country and internationally. The results of this research provide the first comprehensive assessment of the physical literacy of Canadian children.

"Through this project, we provide comprehensive evidence that Canadian children aged 8 to 12 years are not meeting the standards for components of physical literacy," said Dr. Tremblay. "For example, boys and girls across Canada have aerobic fitness levels at the 30th percentile of global norms and only 20% are meeting physical activity guidelines."

"These results show us that more needs to be done," said ParticipACTION President and CEO, Elio Antunes. "Every organization concerned with the well-being of children, whether provincial governments, municipal public health and recreation departments, boards of education and sports or recreation groups, should allocate additional resources to increase children's physical literacy. Additional education campaigns, greater priority in school curricula and increased numbers of physical education specialists could have a real impact in the health of Canada's children."

Findings from this project have led to further refinements of the CAPL and the release of the second edition of this tool, or CAPL-2. "Ensuring that we have the right tools for coaches, educators and parents is an important way to increase physical literacy in Canada," says Dr. Pat Longmuir, Scientist with the CHEO Research Institute, HALO Research Group and Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa. "The CAPL-2 is a shorter, easier to administer series of tests that can be used to assess and monitor physical [literacy](#) in Canada. The materials are available in both English and French, free of charge at <http://www.capl->

eclp.ca."

Provided by Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute

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