

Taking a stand: Balancing the BENEFITS and RISKS of physical activity in children

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Taking a Stand: balancing the BENEFITS and RISKS of physical activity in children Today the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology took a stand on the promotion of childhood physical activity and published their position and recommendations in the journal *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism (APNM)*. This position stand provides an important overview of knowledge in the area of risk of physical activity for children and suggests both practical guidelines and a research agenda. Uniquely, this position stand addresses both benefits and risks of physical activity for children.

From the position stand:

Key recommendations for the responsible promotion of childhood physical activity:

Professionals/researchers encouraging children to change the type of physical activity or to increase the frequency, intensity or duration of their activity should inquire whether a child has primary healthcare provider-prescribed activity limitations before the child's activity participation changes.

Physical activity researchers should prioritize the development of evidence regarding the benefits and [risks](#) of childhood physical activity and inactivity, particularly the risks of sedentary lifestyles, physical activity associated injury risks accounting for amount of activity performed, and effectiveness of current risk management strategies and screening approaches.

Professionals and researchers should prioritize the dissemination of information regarding the benefits of physical activity and the risks of sedentary behaviour in children.

Parents and professionals should encourage all children to accumulate at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.

Dr. Pat Longmuir, lead author, a scientist with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) Research Group at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute (CHEO-RI) explains why this project started:

"Essentially, it was because of concerns that encouraging children to do vigorous activity was 'dangerous' in that it might precipitate a cardiac arrest due to an unrecognized cardiac condition (e.g., the child who dies playing ice hockey). There were equally strong desires to encourage greater physical activity, including vigorous intensity activities, based on current guidelines and recommendations for optimal health (60 mins/day and vigorous at least 3 days/week). We also knew that decisions on this topic are often made based on the personal experiences/beliefs of the individual making the decision because the research/data is almost non-existent.

The goal with the position stand was really two-fold:

Make it clear that there is very little to no good data on this topic (and research needs to be done)

Until we have better data, our expert group recommendation is to determine if a child has healthcare provider-prescribed activity restrictions before suggesting any physical activity changes."

Lori Zehr, President of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology comments:

"The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology is extremely supportive of the research conducted in the making of this position stand. The impact of physical activity on children has and always will be an important goal for us. Our physical activity/sedentary behavior guidelines outline the evidence-based recommendations for newborns to youth 17 years of age. We have confidence that this position stand highlights the importance of

evidence supporting the benefits, and risks, of childhood physical activity as well as the particular risks associated with their inactivity."

Dr. Terry Graham, Editor APNM comments:

"CSEP, the national voice for [exercise physiology](#), has published an objective report that considers not only the benefits but also the risks of [physical activity](#). The latter have rarely been considered in such young individuals; these may be serious injuries with long term health implications and in rare circumstances sudden death. In today's world many young children are under the supervision of professionals for extended periods of time while both parents work and furthermore, [children](#) are often encouraged to take part in 'sport camps' that may provide prolonged, intense exercise. Thus this position stand is particularly timely and applicable to our society."

More information: "[Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology Position Stand: Benefit and Risk for Promoting Childhood Physical Activity](#)" was published today in the journal [Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism](#). This work was supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (reference # 119124).

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