



**CANADIAN ACADEMY OF SPORT MEDICINE  
ACADÉMIE CANADIENNE DE MÉDECINE DU  
SPORT**

*“Committed to Excellence • L’excellence dans la pratique”*

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

### ***Physical Inactivity in Children and Adolescents***

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This position statement was prepared by the Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine (CASM) Ad Hoc Committee on Children's Fitness. This position statement was approved by the CASM Board of Directors as a CASM position statement in April, 2004.

This position statement outlines the concerns of the Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine (CASM) regarding the alarming increase in sedentary activity and the declining fitness of children in Canada. The evidence and issues supporting our position are presented in a complementary discussion paper.

Recommendations by Health Canada include increasing moderate and vigorous activity and decreasing sedentary activity. Based on “The Canada Physical Activity Guides,” children and youth should increase their daily physical activity by at least 30 minutes towards a goal of 90 minutes of physical activity each day. The time needed for such an increment can become available by reducing daily “screen” time (TV, computer, video games, etc.) by at least 30 minutes.

The recommended approach for reducing childhood obesity is a balanced diet and regular physical activity of moderate or vigorous intensity. Parents and children should eat a proper, nutritious diet by selecting foods and beverages with good nutritional value and without unnecessary calories.

There are many societal influences which affect physical activity behaviour. Parents should exercise regularly for personal health benefits and to present a good role model for children and youths. Coaches and teachers should emphasize healthy lifestyle behaviours including regular exercise and proper diet. A priority in communities should be maintaining and striving to improve physical activity in schools, and ensuring safe, accessible facilities for children. Widespread community intervention strategies should be developed to increase activities among young people, particularly adolescent females.

Schools should provide quality physical education programs, including extra-curricular activities, to take advantage of a major opportunity to promote physical activity and healthy behaviours. Government and organizations should develop further policies to maximize the opportunity for exercise in the general child population, including increasing accessibility and the number of facilities for physical activities. Media should provide responsible advertising and help promote the need for proper exercise and diet as important cornerstones of a healthy lifestyle.

### **For physicians and allied health professionals**

Health care professionals, especially sport medicine physicians, should be more aware of effective methods for increasing participation in physical activity for their patients. Health practitioners should use every opportunity, particularly during annual health exams, to discuss physical activity recommendations with young people and their parents. It is important for physicians to check for medical problems such as hypertension, asthma, type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, and osteoporosis in children who are “overweight.” An exercise prescription should include written instructions to increase compliance. The message for children is that increased physical activity can be attained through free play or organized sport, depending on the child’s interest. The FUN element in children’s activities is paramount.