Physical Activity
# Chapter 9: Physical activity

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Glossary

**Active living**: Active living is when physical activity is valued and included in daily routines.

**Active play**: Active play is when children move about when they play. This type of play results in the child breathing faster and deeper, and their heart beating faster.

**Child care setting**: This refers to the setting in which child care is offered and includes child care centres and home child care settings.

**Fundamental movement skills**: These are basic movement skills that a child needs to learn and build on; they are like the ABC's of reading. Examples include running, throwing and catching. When a child masters these skills, they develop the confidence and competence to participate in games, sports and activities that use these skills, and are more likely to be active through life.

**Inclusive environment**: Activities are planned and/or changed in a way that all children can participate and no one will be left out.

**Infant**: Health Canada defines an infant as being a child from birth to 12 months of age.

**Active outdoor play**: Children are given the opportunity outside to move, using their large muscles and whole body to be active. It allows children to have fun, be creative, experience nature and learn about their environment. It lets children challenge themselves, problem solve, become more aware of their abilities and helps them to be confident, bounce back when they struggle and self-regulate.

**Physical activity policy**: A policy that when adopted, provides an environment that helps to ensure physical activity is part of the normal culture of the child care setting.

**Physical activity**: Is any activity that gets a child moving or using their muscles. It has been defined as any movement that requires energy, increases heart rate and increases breathing.

**Physical literacy**: Is about the development of movement skills and confidence to be physically active. Children develop physical literacy through daily active play when they run, jump, throw, catch, kick, swim, and more. By exploring a variety of physical activities and play in structured and unstructured settings, children develop the foundation to participate in activities, games and sports and are more likely to be active throughout their life. In the Physical Literacy Consensus Statement, it is defined as: “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”

**Preschooler**: The Canadian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines define a preschooler as a child from three to four years of age.

**Risky play**: Children are provided with opportunities to take a reasonable degree of risk in a safe play environment. Children are allowed to do age-appropriate activities that challenge them at a manageable level of risk, while being supervised by an adult. Risky play could include climbing, swinging and exploring natural environments and is an important part of a child’s development.
Sedentary behaviour: Sedentary behaviour is any activity that requires very little movement and is often done sitting or lying down, such as watching television, sitting in a motor vehicle or stroller, and playing on a computer or other type of screen.

Self-regulate: Self-regulation is when children are able to calm themselves down and to control themselves when they feel upset. It is a set of skills that children learn beginning at birth. Parents and caregivers have an important role in helping children learn ways to calm themselves. When a child is able to self-regulate they will be better able to: follow directions; communicate their needs; finish an activity; solve problems; and get along with others.

Structured physical activity: Is also called adult-led play, and includes activities that are planned and led by an adult, such as group games and skill-building activities.

Toddler: The Canadian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines define a toddler as being a child from one to two years of age.

Unstructured physical activity: Is also called child-led play, and happens when children are allowed to choose what to play and how to play. It gives children the opportunity to use their imagination and participate in 'pretend' play.
Active living

Active living is valuing physical activity and including it in daily routines. Physical activity is an important part of healthy child development and should be a regular part of a child’s day. When children are physically active early in life, they are more likely to learn the skills they need to lead a healthy active lifestyle when they are older. This reduces their risk for health problems like diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and some cancers. Physical activity during childhood is also important for healthy brain development, improves a child’s ability to learn and helps foster good mental health.

The child care setting is where young children learn, play and get a lot of their daily activity. By supporting physical activity, child care providers can play a big role in teaching children about the importance of physical activity and in forming good physical activity habits.

This section provides information, links to resources and suggestions that child care providers can use to help children develop the skills they need to lead a healthy active lifestyle during childhood and as adults.

Legislation and guiding frameworks

Ministry of Education: Child Care and Early Years Act (2014)

Licensed child care centres and home child care providers must follow the Ontario Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 Regulation 137/15 (CCEYA). A number of sections in the Act are related to play and physical activity in child care centres and home child care settings.

See the complete Child Care and Early Years Act at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/professionals.html

Section 46 of the CCEYA says that licensed child care centre operators must have a program statement in line with How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years. They must also describe the goals that guide the program for children and the ways that they will:

- Promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of children.
- Support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff.
- Encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.
- Foster the children’s exploration, play and inquiry.
- Provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.
- Plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported.
• Incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day. Give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving child care.

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

This professional resource document was released in 2014 by the Ministry of Education. It includes goals for children and expectations for programs that are organized around the foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression. It also integrates the following six guiding principles of the ELECT early learning framework (Early Learning for Every Child Today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings, 2007):

• Positive experiences in early childhood set the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, health and well-being.
• Partnerships with families and communities are essential.
• Respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion is vital.
• An intentional, planned program supports learning.
• Play and inquiry are learning approaches that capitalize on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance.
• Knowledgeable, responsive, and reflective educators are essential.

For the complete ELECT Framework, see the Ministry of Education website.

Child care providers can view the goals and expectations outlined in the document “How Does Learning Happen?” with physical activity in mind. Table 1 below is a good resource for helping child care providers to link physical activity planning with the basics of the “How Does Learning Happen?” document.
Table 1. The four foundations and program expectations in relation to physical activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation and program expectation</th>
<th>Relation to physical activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belonging</strong></td>
<td>When children feel secure and safe, they are more likely to have the confidence to play, explore and learn about the world around them. Caregivers can help build a sense of belonging by:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults and the world around them.” | - Considering the skill and comfort level of each child when planning games and activities and ensuring that all children can participate.  
- Taking advantage of physical activity opportunities during one-to-one interactions in daily routines, such as diaper changing times.  
- Helping children to understand the capabilities and challenges of others and encouraging them to be inclusive in their play. |
| **Well-being**                     | Early experiences significantly impact brain development and the health of young children. Physical activity programs can benefit a child’s health by: |
| "Early childhood programs nurture children’s healthy development and support their growing sense of self.” | - Providing opportunities each day for active play and exploration.  
- Limiting the time children are involved in sedentary activities.  
- Creating safe and exciting outdoor environments for active play, while considering the skill level and capabilities of all children.  
- Enabling children to take reasonable risks and gain more competence through active play. |
| **Engagement**                     | When a child is engaged they are interested and involved in what they are doing. Children are more likely to participate in activities and play when they are allowed to: |
| "Early childhood programs provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry.” | - Participate in unstructured play by themselves or with other children.  
- Choose a group activity from a variety of options.  
- Suggest an activity or game for the group to play.  
- Explore their environment using a variety of natural materials and play structures. |
| **Expression**                     | Children can express themselves by moving in different ways and by participating in a variety of activities that allow them to express themselves in a physical way in addition to verbal communication. Encourage children to: |
| "Early childhood programs foster communication and expression in all forms.” | - Move creatively using their imagination, such as pretending to be different kinds of animals.  
- Use different movements such as hopping or jumping to circle time and at other times when there is a change in programming throughout the day.  
- Act out stories that are read to them. |
For the document *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*, see the [Ministry of Education website](https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/).
Physical literacy
Child care providers can help increase physical literacy. In the Physical Literacy Consensus Statement (2015), physical literacy is defined as: “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”

Physical literacy helps the growth and development of children and sets the stage for lifelong activity. Children who develop physical literacy have the knowledge, skills and desire to be active throughout their life.

Children do not naturally develop physical literacy on their own. The Ontario Society of Physical Activity Promoters in Public Health suggests that physical literacy be a priority in educational and child care settings and recommends that play-based learning be used to provide chances for children to develop and practice basic movement skills.

Child care providers and physical literacy
Child care providers should be trained in physical literacy to help children gain physical literacy skills.

Child care providers can help children learn the basic movement skills by:

- Providing simple, safe and enjoyable activities that will help children learn the basic movement skills.
- Creating more opportunities for play.
- Helping them take part in positive and fun physical activities.
- Using games and activities where children can learn and practice basic movement skills.

For young children, physical literacy is the development of fundamental (basic) movement skills. Learning how to do basic movements is like a child learning their ABC’s when learning to read; they must learn the basic skills before they can do more complicated tasks.

Table 2. Examples of fundamental movement skills according to a child’s age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Examples of fundamental movement skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to two years</td>
<td>Grasping, rolling over, sitting, crawling and walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two to four years</td>
<td>Running, throwing, catching, kicking, swimming and skating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four to six years</td>
<td>Running, throwing, catching, tumbling, hopping, jumping, skipping, swimming, skating and cycling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fundamental movement skills as building blocks
Children who are given many chances to learn and practice these skills early in life are able to build on them as they get older. This allows children to develop the competence and confidence to participate in activities, games and sports that use these skills. They will also be more likely to lead a healthy active lifestyle when they are adults.

Table 3. Examples of physical literacy skills and related activities
If you can… | You are more likely to participate in:
---|---
Run | Soccer, football, basketball, tennis, badminton.
Swim | Swimming, canoeing, sailing, kayaking, diving, waterskiing.
Throw | Baseball, frisbee, bowling, football, basketball.

It is important for children to start learning physical literacy skills early in life when the brain is developing. Regular physical activity helps to make connections (neural pathways) in the brain that lead to improved:

- Strength and endurance
- Movement
- Flexibility
- Coordination and balance

The HANDS UP for Health and Physical Literacy video *Introduction to Physical and Health Literacy* describes how developing basic movement skills contributes to the development of physical literacy, and the role it plays in children’s future health. For the online video, visit [Ophea Canada's YouTube channel](http://canadiansportforlife.ca/).

Although children develop at different rates, they usually learn basic movement skills in the same order and go through the same developmental stages to learn a skill. Children learn from experience. They will develop at their own rate to learn and master a skill when their body is ready.

For information about how a child’s development is connected to learning fundamental movement skills, see the Canadian Sport for Life Society website links at:

- [http://canadiansportforlife.ca/fundamental-skills/timing](http://canadiansportforlife.ca/fundamental-skills/timing)
- [http://canadiansportforlife.ca/physical-literacy/more-about-fundamental-skills](http://canadiansportforlife.ca/physical-literacy/more-about-fundamental-skills)

Children who do not learn the basic movement skills are:

- Less likely to join in and play with other children.
- More likely to avoid being physically active.
- More likely to choose sedentary (inactive) activities.

For more information about physical literacy, see the [Active for Life website](http://activeforlife.ca/) and the [ParticipACTION physical literacy toolkit](http://participaction.ca/).

For information about how to assess a child’s physical literacy level, see the resources page on the [physical literacy website](http://physicalliteracy.ca/) and the [Canadian Assessment of Physical Literacy Quick Reference Guide](http://canadiansportforlife.ca/physical-literacy).

**Sedentary activity/behaviour**

Sedentary behaviour is any activity that requires very little movement and is often done sitting or lying down, such as watching television, playing on a computer or other type of screen, or sitting in a motor vehicle or stroller.
Sedentary activities and healthy development

Recent evidence shows that a lot of time spent in sedentary activities may affect brain development and too much inactivity could result in an increased risk for some chronic diseases. Children who are inactive are also more likely to have lower school grades, less confidence, lower self-esteem, and poor social skills. Increasing physical activity and limiting sedentary time offers many benefits to a child’s overall health and development.

According to the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 76 per cent of three to four year olds and 51 per cent of five to 17 year olds in Canada have more screen time than what is recommended in the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for recreational screen-based sedentary behaviours.

For healthy growth and development, the time infants and young children spend being sedentary while awake should be minimized. Caregivers can play an important role in reducing the amount of time children spend being sedentary each day. Be sure to build in opportunities for children to move and be active when planning daily schedules and curriculum.

Remember the message: “move more…move often.”
Physical activity
Physical activity is any activity that gets a child moving, using energy to move their muscles, raises their heart rate and increases their breathing. Physical activity is how children develop physical literacy.

Physical activity and healthy development
Physical activity is important for healthy growth and supports the development of the whole child, which includes their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Participation in regular physical activity supports healthy brain development, brain function and better mental health. It has been found to help prevent and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in children and youth.

Table 5. Examples of how physical activity supports the development of the whole child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Areas</th>
<th>How physical activity supports child development:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Development</td>
<td>• Builds strong bones and muscles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strengthens the heart and lungs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps a child to grow and to have a healthy body weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps a child develop good posture, strength, endurance, balance, coordination and flexibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supports the development of large and small motor control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offers opportunities to learn and practice fundamental movement skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improves a child’s energy level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps a child sleep better at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Development</td>
<td>• Encourages early brain development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides experiences that help build connections in the brain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improves a child’s ability to pay attention and concentrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps a child to focus, be ready to learn and succeed in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improves a child’s ability to learn and problem-solve (develop thinking skills).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Development</td>
<td>• Provides fun experiences that help a child feel happy and good about themselves (builds self-esteem).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps a child to deal with worry and stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reduces feelings of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Development</td>
<td>• Helps a child to develop self-control and to have positive behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides opportunities for a child to interact and learn to get along with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps a child to develop confidence and leadership skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical activity should be fun for children and can be built into their day in a variety of ways, including:

- Play
- Games
- Active transportation (such as walking or biking)
- Recreation
- Physical education

Ideally children should have opportunities to be physically active in all environments including:

- On the ground (such as running, kicking, throwing)
- In the air (such as jumping, swinging)
- In the water (such as swimming)
- On snow and ice (such as sledding and skating)

According to the 2018 ParticipACTION Physical Activity Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 62 per cent of three to four year olds are reaching their recommended physical activity levels for their age group, while only 35 per cent of five to 17 year olds are reaching the recommended activity levels for their age group. This tells us that Canadian children move too little to get all the benefits of physical activity.

For the full 2018 ParticipACTION Physical Activity Report Card, visit the ParticipACTION website.

Caregivers can play an important role in increasing the amount of time children spend being active each day.

- Build in opportunities for children to move and be active when planning daily programs (see page 25 for ideas).
- Provide lots of ways that children can be physically active; avoid offering the same activities over and over again.
- Encourage children to try new activities and focus on having fun together.
- Remember to plan both indoor and outdoor activities.
- Consider safety when planning activities (see page 20).
- Make sure no child is left out of an activity; see page 22 for things to consider.

How much physical activity and sedentary activity/screen time should children have?

The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines replace the previous physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines. They are the first evidence-based guidelines that look at the inter-relationship of physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep over a day; if one is increased, something else has to decrease. **The whole day matters!**

The Guidelines can be used to help make sure children get a healthy balance of physical activity, sleep and sedentary behaviours each day by providing direction on how much and what kind of physical activity, sedentary activities and sleep children need for good health. Provided that children get enough sleep each day, children have greater health benefits when they have more physical activity and less screen time than what is recommended.
The health benefits of high levels of physical activity are less if children have too much screen time or do not get enough sleep. For enough sleep, let parents know that it is important for children to develop healthy sleep behaviours; the following things will help with this:

- A calming bedtime routine
- Consistent bedtimes and wake-up times
- Avoiding screen time before sleep
- Keeping screens out of the bedroom

There are two sets of guidelines; one for the early years (0-4 years) and another for children and youth (5-17 years). The guidelines apply to all healthy children. Children not currently meeting the guidelines can be helped to gradually adjust their behaviours towards meeting them. Children should be provided with opportunities to play on their own, with adults, and with other children in a variety of settings such as: in the home, at child care/school and in the community.

**The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (0-4 years)**

For healthy growth and development, children should have the recommended balance of physical activity, high-quality sedentary behaviour and sufficient sleep. A healthy 24-hours includes three concepts: move, sleep and sit.

**Infants (0-12 months)**

**Move**

Infants should be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways, including through interactive, floor-based play. This includes tummy time, reaching for toys, playing or rolling on the floor and crawling.

Infants not yet mobile should have at least 30 minutes of supervised tummy time spread throughout the day while awake. Tummy time is play time with the baby on a hard surface while on their stomach, with a caregiver within reach. Being on their stomach helps babies to develop their neck muscles, arm strength, and helps prepare them for crawling. Before starting tummy time with a baby, talk to the parents. If tummy time is new for baby, start with one or two minutes once a day and gradually increase the amount of time baby spends on their tummy. It is important to pick the baby up as soon as they start to fuss. Suggest parents have tummy time at home.

**Sleep**

- Infants from birth to three months of age should have 14 to 17 hours of good quality sleep, including naps.
- Infants from four to 11 months of age should have from 12 to 16 hours of good quality sleep, including naps.

**Sit**

- Infants should not be restrained for more than one hour at a time, such as in a swing, high chair, stroller, wagon or car seat.
- When sedentary, reading and story-telling with a caregiver is encouraged.
- It is recommended that infants have **no screen time**.
Toddlers and preschoolers (1-2 years and 3-4 years)

**Move**
Toddlers should have a total of at least 180 minutes (3 hours) of physical activity at any level (intensity) spread throughout the day, including energetic play.

Preschoolers should have a total of at least 180 minutes (3 hours) of physical activity at any level (intensity) spread throughout the day, with at least 60 minutes of this being engaged in energetic play.

Young children should participate in a variety of developmentally appropriate, enjoyable, and safe play-based and organized physical activities, including those that build movement skills and help in the development of physical literacy. For toddlers and preschoolers, this includes any activity that gets a child moving, such as crawling, walking, running, climbing stairs and dancing.

**Sleep**
- Toddlers (1-2 years) should have 11 to 14 hours of good quality sleep, including naps, with consistent bedtimes and wake-up times.
- Preschoolers (3-4 years) should have 10 to 13 hours of good quality sleep, which may include a nap, with consistent bedtimes and wake-up times.

**Sit**
- Toddlers and preschoolers should **not** be restrained for more than one hour at a time, such as in a high chair, stroller, wagon or car seat.
- Young children should **not** sit for extended periods of time.
- When sedentary, reading, story-telling, singing songs and other non-screen based activities such as doing puzzles with a caregiver is encouraged.
- Screen time should be avoided or limited. It is recommended that:
  - Children younger than two years have **no screen** time.
  - Children from two to four years have **no more than one hour a day of screen time** – less is better.

See the [24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years](#) resource.

**Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (5-17 years)**

**Children over five years of age**
For the greatest health benefits, children and youth should have high levels of physical activity, low levels of sedentary behaviour, and get enough sleep each day. A healthy 24-hours includes four concepts: sweat, step, sleep and sit:

**Sweat**
- Get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.
- Include vigorous physical activities and muscle and bone strengthening physical activities at least three days a week.

**Step**
- Spend several hours a day doing a variety of structured and unstructured light physical activities.

**Sleep**
• Children five to 13 years of age should have nine to 11 hours of uninterrupted sleep, with consistent bedtimes and wake-up times.

Sit
• Have no more than two hours a day of recreational screen time.
• Limit sitting for extended periods of time.

The 24-hour movement guidelines suggest that children will have greater health benefits if they:
• Trade indoor time for outdoor time.
• Replace sedentary behaviours with light intensity physical activities.
• Have additional moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day.

See the Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth: An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep resource for more details.

When talking to parents, let them know that:
• More physical activity is better.
• Less screen time is better.
More about screen time

The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) statement Screen time and young children: Promoting health and development in a digital world discusses the potential benefits and risks of screen media use in children under five years old. The statement warns that a child’s early screen use can increase the likelihood of overuse later in life. To promote child health and development the CPS recommends that sedentary screen time not be a routine part of child care for children younger than five years old and that:

- An adult should be present and engaged when screens are used and, when possible, view with children.
- Caregivers should be aware of content and prioritize educational, age-appropriate and interactive programming.
- Strategies that teach self-regulation, calming and limit-setting should be used.
- Too much screen time means lost opportunities for teaching and learning. There is no evidence to support the introduction of technology at an early age.
- Caregivers should model healthy screen use:
  - Choose healthy alternatives, such as reading, outdoor play and creative, hands-on activities.
  - Advise parents to:
    - Turn off devices at home during family time.
    - Turn off screens when not in use and avoid background TV.
    - Avoid screens for at least one hour before a child’s bedtime.

The CPS has information about screen time for parents on the Caring for kids webpages.

Physical activity and play

For young children, physical activity usually happens during play time, and is often called the ‘work’ of children. Children need to be given daily opportunities to experience different kinds of play both inside and outdoors.

The following different types play should be offered to children each day in the child care setting.

Unstructured physical activity (child-led play)

In unstructured free-play time, children can choose what to play with and how to play; on their own or with other children. This allows children to use their imaginations, pretend-play and make up their own games. The adult’s role is to oversee at a level that makes sense for the age and developmental stage of the child. If an adult joins in during unstructured play time, the child should lead the activity.

Structured physical activity (adult-led play)

Structured activities are planned and led by an adult. They include group activities that get everyone moving, and games that everyone plays together. These activities can be used to improve basic movement skills and create chances for children to learn the rules to a game.
**Active play**
Active play can vary in intensity and helps children meet the physical activity needs for their age. Energetic play results in the child breathing faster and deeper, and their heart beating faster. It also helps children build their ability and confidence with basic movement skills.

**Outdoor play**
Children tend to be more energetic, play longer and sit less when they are outside. The outdoors allows children to have fun, be creative, experience nature and learn about their environment.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act (2014)* program requirements for outdoor play found in Section 47 requires that children in licensed child care for six hours or more a day, **spend time outdoors for at least two hours each day** when the weather allows, unless the parent or physician of the child provides other directions in writing.

Children should be dressed for the weather and have protection from the sun if needed. For information about weather and safety considerations for outdoor play, see page 20 in this chapter.

**Active outdoor play**
Outside activity helps children develop physical literacy skills by providing a setting where they can be active in many ways, using their large muscles and whole body in vigorous play, such as running, jumping, climbing and throwing. It can also provide opportunities for children to challenge themselves, problem solve, become more aware of their abilities and helps them to be confident, bounce back when they struggle and self-regulate.

The *Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play* was developed by experts using the best available evidence and promotes active outdoor play as being **essential for healthy child development, even if there is some risk.** It recommends “increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings-at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.”

The position statement recommends that educators and caregivers:

- Regularly encourage outdoor play in various weather conditions (rain and snow).
- Provide natural play settings.
- Support children to participate in risky active play, recognizing the difference between danger and risk.

See the entire [position statement](#) at the CHEO Research Institute website.

**How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years** also discusses the role of risky play in the development of a child’s sense of self, health and well-being. “Children need to engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces and playgrounds that present manageable levels of challenge.” It recommends that we let children take a reasonable degree of risk in a safe play environment.

Play that involves age-appropriate risk allows children to challenge themselves and develop decision-making skills. Risky play could include:
Physical activity and safety in a child care setting

Safety is important when providing physical activity opportunities for children, both inside and outdoors. Child care providers should think about how to reduce or eliminate the risk of injury when planning activities and teach children how to stay safe during play.

The role of the caregiver in risky play is to:

- Make sure that the playground is safe by removing any risks that the child is not aware of, or the child is developmentally unable to manage.
- Make sure that the level of risk makes sense for the child’s stage of development (the child has the skills to manage the risk).
- Help children learn to identify, assess and manage a risk.
- Support children to make good decisions about whether or not to take a risk.

The following tips help child care providers provide safe play and activity opportunities for children in the child care setting:

- Supervise the children at all times:
  - Be able to see the children at all times and pay attention to them.
  - Be in reach of young children, especially when on play equipment.
  - Teach children to wait their turn and not to push.
  - Join in with activities when appropriate.
- Plan fun activities for the children’s stage of development and abilities, while still pushing them to improve their skills.
- Teach the activity to the children first to make sure everyone understands how to do the activity or play the game safely:
  - Include warm up and cool down times.
  - Start by showing the movement skill(s) first and then show how they are used in the activity.
  - Teach the safety rules for the game/activity.
  - Encourage cooperative play.
- Make sure the setting and facilities are suitable:
  - Area is clear - furniture and toys are put away inside; there is no glass, garbage or other hazards outside.
  - There is enough space for everyone to move to do the activity.
  - There is a proper surface (flooring or ground) that is not slippery.
- Dress children for the weather conditions and the activity:
  - Proper type of clothing (mittens, hat, warm clothes when cold).
  - Clothing is non-restrictive and safe; no drawstrings or loose scarves, no hanging jewellery.
  - Proper footwear is worn (rubber soled shoes or boots) and footwear is securely fastened (shoelaces are tied, Velcro is fastened).
• Ensure children wear protective gear if needed (bike helmets, safety glasses).
• Take care to protect against the sun when appropriate (sunscreen, hat, long sleeves or pants, shade).
• Ensure children’s eyeglasses are secure and made of shatterproof lenses or a safety strap is used.
• Provide water for thirst so that children stay hydrated.
• Provide equipment that is safe and appropriate for the stage of development of the children:
  o Teach children how to use the play equipment and watch to make sure that it is used as it is intended.
  o If a child is not able to reach the play equipment on their own, they probably shouldn’t be on it.
  o Ensure all equipment meets the safety guidelines as outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

The Canadian Sport for Life resource **PLAY SAFE: Physical Literacy and Injury Prevention Guide for Leaders** helps those organising activities to understand the process that leads to injury and, where possible, strategies that can be used to prevent or minimize risk in their programs.

For the resource **PLAY SAFE: Physical Literacy and Injury Prevention Guide for Leaders** see the [Canadian Sport for Life website](https://www.cansport4life.org/).
Physical activity and an inclusive environment

When planning activities for children, make sure that everyone can participate and that no one will be left out. Modify and individualize the activity as necessary. Things to consider include:

- The various abilities and interests of the children:
  - Have realistic expectations, but keep it challenging.
  - Provide assistance only as needed.
  - Respect and support a child’s right to take a reasonable risk and their choice not to.
  - Lead activities using a variety of different teaching styles.
  - Provide equipment that can be adapted or modified for different abilities.
  - Offer physical activity opportunities equally to girls and boys.

- The cultural backgrounds of the children in the child care setting:
  - Use music and activities that reflect various cultures, including songs, instruments and dances.
  - Ask families to provide information and instructions for traditional games and activities from their cultural backgrounds.

For information about creating programs that are inclusive of all abilities, see: http://www.physicalliteracy.ca/inclusion.

See the checklist Planning for a Multicultural Child Care Environment for examples of things to consider for an inclusive multicultural environment in the child care setting.

Physical activity policy

An environment that promotes active living should be a part of the normal culture of the child care setting. One way to influence the active living culture within a child care centre is through the development and enforcement of policies. A physical activity policy can help ensure that:

- Daily physical activity is embedded in the curriculum and programming
- Individual abilities and cultural backgrounds of children are considered in programming and when planning activities
- Sedentary activity is limited
- Parents are informed
- Training is provided for staff

It is important to educate staff so that they are aware of and understand the policy and how it will be monitored and enforced. Make sure that all new staff are given information about the policy and provide an annual review for all staff to keep the policy active.

How to develop a physical activity policy

Step 1: Identify a leader and form a committee.

The person leading the committee should have an understanding of the role of physical activity in the child care setting and have the skills to facilitate the process.

- Committee members should include representatives from those who will be affected by the policy, such as child care centre board members, child care
management/supervisors, child care staff, and parents of children attending the centre. Other stakeholders such as the Ministry advisor or health professionals may be helpful as well.

- Set a realistic time frame and review progress on a regular basis.

**Step 2: Create a vision statement that reflects the purpose and goals of the policy.**
The statement should capture what is important and what the environment will look like once the policy is in place.

**Step 3: Review current practices and policies.**
Look at what is presently being done to see what supports or interferes with the goal of the policy and identify areas for improvement.

The resource *Jump into Play: Increasing Children’s Physical Literacy in Early Learning Settings* can be used to help assess the physical activity environment of a child care setting and prepare an action plan to address areas for improvement.

For the *Jump into Play: Increasing Children’s Physical Literacy in Early Learning Settings* resource, see the [Have a Ball Together website](#).

**Step 4: Develop a draft policy.**
Include items that were discussed in the purpose and goals discussion. A physical activity policy could include guidelines that:

- Help to support and encourage children to be active and provide direction by:
  - Including all children in activities.
  - Incorporating active living themes throughout the curriculum, such as reading stories about being active.
  - Using discipline measures that do not include making a child do physical activity or withholding physical activity.
  - Role modeling by staff so that they are active and play with children at appropriate times.
  - Providing information to parents about the importance of physical activity and how they can include opportunities for physical activity and limit screen time at home.
  - Providing events and opportunities for parents and children to play together at the centre.
- Provide a variety of opportunities to be active throughout the day and reduce time spent sedentary by:
  - Setting a schedule of daily opportunities for different types of play.
  - Ensuring that children spend at least two hours outdoors as specified in Section 47 of the CCEYA.
  - Separating sedentary activities with opportunities to move and be physically active.
  - Setting screen time limits.
  - Adjusting program plans with indoor physical activity when extreme weather conditions prevent outdoor active play.
  - Ensuring children have appropriate clothing for outdoor activities.
  - Providing a variety of indoor and outdoor equipment; both fixed and portable.
- Ensure safety regulations under Section 24 of the CCEYA regulations are met by:
o Developing a playground safety policy to outline roles and responsibilities of staff regarding safety on playgrounds.

o Doing regular safety inspections of outdoor play spaces, fixed play structures and surfaces under structures; and developing a plan on how to address concerns identified during inspections.

o Completing a daily safety inspection log.

o Provide direction for professional development for staff. This could include:
  - Understanding the importance of physical activity and physical literacy in early child development.
  - Incorporating physical activity into programs and interactions with children.

**Step 5: Get feedback on the draft content and finalize the policy.**
Consult with the larger child care centre board, staff, parent groups and other identified stakeholders. Adjust the policy as needed based on the feedback.

**Step 6: Develop a process to monitor the policy.**
Set up a procedure to check on how the policy is working; assign the task to a specific person.

**Step 7: Develop a plan to communicate the new policy.**
Communicate the final policy to staff and parents so that they can understand any changes that are needed and have time to get used to them. Educate staff on how to implement the policy and how it will be monitored and enforced.

**Step 8: Review and evaluate the policy regularly and update as needed.**
Determine what is working and what needs to be changed to improve the policy.

- Assess the policy at least once a year and make changes to the items that are not working.
- When assessing the policy get feedback from the groups that are affected by the policy, such as parents, staff, board members and supervisors/management.
- Re-educate staff and parents around the policy as needed.

The **Workbook for Influencing Physical Activity Policy** can be used to help develop a physical activity policy. To access this online tool see the Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit website.

**Building physical activity into activities and learning**
Child care providers can help children begin to develop healthy habits by building physical activity into the curriculum, and teaching positive attitudes towards physical activity.

Child care providers can include physical activity and active living values into the daily curriculum in a number of ways:

- Encourage children to act out the words in books and songs.
- Read books about people who are active.
- Go on a nature walk to talk about nature and the environment.
- Have children use their bodies to create shapes, numbers and letters.
- Ask children to count the number of different movements they can do.
- Display pictures of children doing different movements or playing actively.
- Be an active role model by participating in structured and unstructured physical activities with the children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Examples of activities according to a child’s age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants (birth to 12 months)</td>
<td>Infants need time to explore their environment in a safe setting that does not restrict their movement. • Provide time on their stomach (tummy time); put a toy out of reach and encourage them to reach for it and move about. • When an infant can sit up, put a toy where they need to bend or reach for it. • Play peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake with them. • Give the infant a variety of objects with different shapes, sizes, weights and textures. • Encourage older infants to grasp large soft toys with two hands and to give them back so they learn to release the toy. • Once an infant is mobile:   o Move a toy and encourage the infant to creep or crawl after it.   o Give the infant balls to push, kick and bring back.   o Provide toys that can be pushed and offer some support to encourage walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers (one to two years)</td>
<td>Once a child starts to walk, child care providers can provide toddlers with opportunities to practice and learn this new skill. • Organize activities such as follow the leader and mirroring games. • Schedule creative movement times. • Provide different kinds of balls for rolling, kicking, throwing and catching. • Practice climbing stairs when appropriate. • Provide toys that toddlers can push. • Provide toys that toddlers can sit on and move with their feet. • Play games such as run and stop, and tag with toddlers who are able to run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschoolers (three to five years of age)</td>
<td>As children get older they need more energetic play such as hopping, jumping, skipping and bike riding. • Help children use and combine the movement skills they have learned and help them learn new movement skills. • Have the group act like an animal, such as hopping like a rabbit, leaping like a frog, stretching like a giraffe. • Play games as a group such as red light green light, hopscotch, follow the leader, marching to drums or other music. • Provide appropriate sized tricycles or riding toys with pedals that children can ride and learn how to pedal (provide helmets). • Provide child-sized equipment that children can climb on. • Encourage balance activities such as walking along a skipping rope on the ground. Be sure to place the skipping rope in different patterns to add a bit of a challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children five years and older</td>
<td>Older children need lots of chances to combine the movement skills they have learned to play energetic games and sports (such as using the skills of running and kicking to play soccer). • Provide age-appropriate bicycles for children to ride (provide helmets). • Provide outdoor play structures that they can use to strengthen their muscles by lifting themselves, and climbing on. • Organize games of tag or catch the flag. • Have a dance party. • Encourage children to make up their own games. • Organize games that use more than one movement skill, and teach children to follow a set of rules. For example, baseball uses the skills of running, hitting, throwing, and catching and has rules to need to be followed to play the game. • Set up obstacle courses that require children to use a variety of movement skills, coordination and balance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More ideas for increasing physical activity and decreasing sedentary time in the child care setting can be found in some of the resources and websites provided on pages 29 to 32 of this chapter. In particular, you may want to check out:

- [Have a Ball Together! website](#)
- [Rainbow Fun Program from Toronto Public Health](#)
• **A Hop, Skip, and a Jump: Enhancing Physical Literacy**

**Documents and reports related to physical activity**

• **Canada’s Physical Literacy Consensus Statement**

• **Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years** (0-4 years)

• **Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (5-17 years): Integrating physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and sleep**

• **2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth**

• The Ontario Children’s Outdoor Charter encourages children and their families to get outdoors to explore and connect with nature by participating in 12 recommended activities. See this document at: [http://www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca/](http://www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca/)

• Evidence Brief: Kids Have You Played Today? Promoting Active Play for Children 0-12: A Review of Community-Based Interventions. See this report at the [Public Health Ontario website](http://www.publichealthontario.com).

• Evidence brief: The Positive Impacts of Physical Activity on the Whole Child examines the positive impacts of physical activity on a child’s physical, mental and social well-being. See this report at the [Public Health Ontario website](http://www.publichealthontario.com).

  Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play can be seen at the [CHEO Research Institute website](http://www.cheo.ca/)

• **Expert Statement on Physical Activity and Brain Health in Children and Youth**
Additional information and resources for child care providers
The following website links have information, resources and/or videos that can be used to help with program planning, staff training, or to share information with families.

Table 8. Where to go for more information and resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description and link</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active for Life website</strong></td>
<td>This website has information, resources and videos about physical literacy and ideas for getting children to be active: <a href="http://www.activeforlife.com">www.activeforlife.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For activity ideas for children up to three years old see: <a href="http://activeforlife.com/activities-for-babies-and-toddlers/">http://activeforlife.com/activities-for-babies-and-toddlers/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For lesson plans for children from three to 12 years old see: <a href="http://activeforlife.com/lesson-plans-and-resources/">http://activeforlife.com/lesson-plans-and-resources/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have a Ball Together! Website</strong></td>
<td>This website has information about physical activity and physical literacy as well as a searchable data base of age appropriate games and activities for children (0-6 years) that early childhood educators can use in their programming.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two online training modules support continued learning about physical activity and physical literacy for children aged 0-6. Complete both modules or the one that applies best to your role or learning needs. There is also a section on the website for families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For the website see: <a href="http://www.haveaballtogether.ca">www.haveaballtogether.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have a Ball Together! Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>This toolkit has ideas for promoting physical activity opportunities to children in child care and to their parents. Most child care centres in Waterloo Region were given a copy of this toolkit; however, if your centre does not have one, it can be borrowed from the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services Resource Library by calling 519-575-4400.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Literacy in the Early Years Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>This kit provides information about the role of physical activity in the development of physical literacy skills in young children. It includes the DVD “Hands up for physical and health literacy” and the activity cards from the Ophea Early Learning Resource. This kit can be borrowed from the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services Resource Library by calling 519-575-4400.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Canadian Paediatric Society website</strong></td>
<td>The Active Kids Healthy Kids’ section of this website has information and videos about the importance of physical activity for children’s health: <a href="http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/active-kids/active-actifs">http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/active-kids/active-actifs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ParticipACTION website</strong></td>
<td>This website has information about physical activity and sedentary behaviour, as well as the most recent Physical Activity Report Card for Children and Youth. See the ParticipACTION website at:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description and link</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.participACTION.com">www.participACTION.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.participACTION.com">www.participACTION.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport for Life website</td>
<td>This website has information about the importance of learning fundamental movement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>skills for the development of physical literacy. It also has information about how</td>
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<td></td>
<td>physical literacy impacts a child’s ability to play sports and to enjoy being active</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for life. See this website at: <a href="https://canadiansportforlife.ca/educators/ece-preschool">https://canadiansportforlife.ca/educators/ece-preschool</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical literacy website</td>
<td>Two organizations (Sport for Life Society and Physical Literacy for Life) developed</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.physicalliteracy.ca">www.physicalliteracy.ca</a> to provide information about programs, partnerships, best</td>
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<td></td>
<td>practices, research, and opportunities within the physical literacy movement. This</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>website also has tools for assessing the physical literacy skills of children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rainbow Fun program</td>
<td>This program on the Toronto Public Health website is a physical activity and healthy</td>
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<td>eating program for children 3-6 years. It includes information and interactive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>activities for child care providers, educators and parents. See the resource at:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/physical-activity/rainbow-fun/">https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/physical-activity/rainbow-fun/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The 60 Minute Kids Club videos</td>
<td>These videos help educators to teach fundamental movement skills to children by</td>
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<td>showing how to do a skill with step-by-step instructions. Each video links to a</td>
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<td>document that explains the skill and provides activity ideas and games to help</td>
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<td>children to practice and develop the skill. See the videos at:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://fms.60minkidsclub.org/?page_id=270">http://fms.60minkidsclub.org/?page_id=270</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising Our Healthy Kids videos</td>
<td>These short video-clips highlight some key messages about physical activity and are</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>great to share with families and staff:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active Every Day!: <a href="https://vimeo.com/122946916">https://vimeo.com/122946916</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Active for life: <a href="https://vimeo.com/channels/rohkplay/160198183">https://vimeo.com/channels/rohkplay/160198183</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Playing is learning: <a href="https://vimeo.com/channels/rohkplay/122947671">https://vimeo.com/channels/rohkplay/122947671</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get outdoors and explore: <a href="https://vimeo.com/channels/rohkplay/122946919">https://vimeo.com/channels/rohkplay/122946919</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eat Right Be Active booklets (2015)</td>
<td>These booklets for parents and caregivers provide information about healthy eating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and physical activity for children of different age groups. For the toddler booklet</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For the pre-schooler booklet (3 to 5 years), see:</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="http://opha.on.ca/getmedia/0e558a91-3565-443e-ba76-fd3d5210c686/ERBA-3-5-2018.pdf.aspx">http://opha.on.ca/getmedia/0e558a91-3565-443e-ba76-fd3d5210c686/ERBA-3-5-2018.pdf.aspx</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundamental Movement Skills Game Cards</td>
<td>These cards can be used to create fun, developmentally appropriate games that develop children's locomotor and manipulative skills. Use the game cards as part of fundamental movement skills learning experiences with a skill specific warm up and cool down, five minutes long. The cards can be accessed at: <a href="http://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/media/1071/i-move-we-move-games-cards.pdf">http://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/media/1071/i-move-we-move-games-cards.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Learning Resource</td>
<td>This resource consists of a series of cards that provide instructions for 50 different activities that support the development of physical literacy as well as other health topics such as healthy eating. To access the cards online see: <a href="http://teachingtools.ophea.net/activities/early-learning-resource">http://teachingtools.ophea.net/activities/early-learning-resource</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPHEA</td>
<td>This website has information and resources and supports related to physical activity for children in kindergarten to grade 12. <a href="https://www.ophea.net/">https://www.ophea.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It Takes a Village: Taking Action for Healthy Children</td>
<td>This free online course is for service providers who work with children aged two to 11 years, and parents. The focus is on healthy weights in children, in the context of healthy child development. Module 6 is on movement and describes the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines as well as the factors that influence a child’s activity level and sedentary behaviour. You can complete the whole course or individual modules. A certificate is provided upon completion. <a href="https://www.beststart.org/TakingAction/">https://www.beststart.org/TakingAction/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC) physical activity kit</td>
<td>The HKCC toolkit helps those who work with children understand and execute games and activities that will help increase the physical literacy of children from birth to 12 years. <a href="https://www.kitchener.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/Documents/CSD_NPS_healthy_kids_community_challenge_toolkit.pdf">https://www.kitchener.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/Documents/CSD_NPS_healthy_kids_community_challenge_toolkit.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factsheets and resources
1. [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (0-4 years)](https://www.betterkidsactivity.net/)
2. [Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth: An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep](https://www.betterkidsactivity.net/)
3. [What is Physical Literacy? infographic](https://www.betterkidsactivity.net/)