

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Children four and under should move more, sit less and avoid screens**

*Canada's first-ever physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines for the early years released*

**TORONTO (ONTARIO) March 27, 2012** – Children aged four and under should move more and sit less every day as recommended by the first-ever Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years. All children aged one to four should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity throughout the day, and children under the age of one should be physically active several times daily. Parents and caregivers should also limit prolonged sitting for more than one hour at a time and excessive screen time.

The Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (ages 0-4 years) are Canada's first systematic evidence-based physical activity guidelines and the world's first standalone sedentary behaviour guidelines for this age group, which puts Canada at the forefront of the emerging body of sedentary research. They are presented by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) and ParticipACTION, with support from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute, Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (CHEO-HALO).

Although children in the early years are assumed to be naturally busy and active, they spend 73 to 84 per cent of their waking hours being sedentary. In addition, despite the detrimental effects on physical and social development, most young children are exposed to screen time too early in life and for too long.

“Regular physical activity is essential at a young age as it contributes to bone and skeletal health, motor skill development, psychosocial health, cognitive development and healthy body weights,” says Dr. Mark Tremblay, Director, CHEO-HALO. “It is also key to avoid the harms associated with excessive sedentary behaviour, in particular the negative effects of screen time exposure, in the earliest years of development. Lifestyle patterns set in the early years predict health outcomes later in life.”

For healthy growth and development, the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years recommend:

- Children under the age of one should be physically active several times daily – particularly through interactive, floor-based play. This should include supervised indoor and outdoor experiences such as tummy time, reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling, and crawling.
- Children aged one to four should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity at any intensity spread throughout the day. This should include a variety of activities in different environments where children can develop movement skills, such as climbing stairs, playing outside and exploring the environment, brisk walking, running or dancing.
- By age five, children should progress towards at least 60 minutes of energetic play, such as hopping, skipping and bike riding.

Minimizing sedentary behaviour, including screen time, during waking hours is just as important as being physically active. Sedentary behaviours are characterized by little physical movement and low energy

expenditure and include sitting or reclining for long periods of time. For healthy growth and development, the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years recommend:

- Caregivers should limit prolonged sitting to no more than one hour at a time, for example, sitting or reclining in a stroller, high chair or car seat, and watching television or playing with non-active electronic devices like computers, video games or phones.
- Screen time is not recommended for children under the age of two.
- Screen time should be limited to less than one hour per day for children aged two to four.

“These guidelines place a high value on the benefits of physical activity that begin in a child’s early years and accumulate throughout life,” says Kelly Murumets, President and CEO of ParticipACTION, the national voice of physical activity and sport participation. “It is crucial for parents and caregivers to give young children regular opportunities to move more, and it can be as simple as getting outdoors to explore the neighbourhood rather than sitting in front of the TV, or by playing on a mat reaching, pushing or crawling rather than keeping children idle in a high chair.”

To download a copy of the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years please visit [www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines) and [participACTION.com](http://participACTION.com).

#### ***About the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology***

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) is the principal body for physical activity, health and fitness research and personal training in Canada. CSEP fosters the generation, growth, synthesis, transfer and application of the highest quality research, education and training related to exercise physiology and science. CSEP is the GOLD STANDARD of health and fitness professionals dedicated to getting Canadians active safely by providing the highest quality customized and specialized physical activity and fitness programs, guidance and advice based on extensive training and evidence-based research. For more information, visit [www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca).

#### ***About ParticipACTION***

ParticipACTION is the national voice of physical activity and sport participation in Canada. Originally established in 1971, ParticipACTION was re-launched in 2007 to help prevent the looming inactivity crisis that faces Canada. As a national not-for-profit organization solely dedicated to inspiring and supporting healthy and active living for Canadians, it works with its partners, which include sport, physical activity, recreation organizations, government and corporate sponsors, to inspire and support Canadians to move more. ParticipACTION is generously supported by Sport Canada. For more information, visit: [www.participACTION.com](http://www.participACTION.com).

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