



SCIP TIPS FOR SUMMER May 2003

The beginning of summer is the perfect time to start actively encouraging children to get outdoors and get moving! Warm summer days and nights are perfect times to go for a walk or a run, to go cycling, to go "blading," to ride a scooter or to play soccer or street hockey. **Children and youth will find it more fun if an adult is doing it with them!**

When studies look at why kids are inactive, the following reasons came up:

- ?? Time pressures;
- ?? Other activities (i.e. TV, computer, Nintendo);
- ?? Lack of money;
- ?? Unaware or lack of recreational activities;
- ?? Unsafe environments;
- ?? Inadequate access to quality daily physical education;
- ?? Inactive parents.

Dr. Claire LeBlanc, the Head of Rheumatology Services at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and Head of the Advisory Committee on Healthy Active Living for Children and Youth says, "There are countless benefits to being physically active. Studies show that it will decrease the likeliness of childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis and may also inhibit depression, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. It may also contribute to higher self-esteem in children and youth."

In studies conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, findings show that 54% of 5-17 year olds were not active enough for optimal growth and development. Adolescents were found to be less active than children aged 2-12 years. Girls were found to be less active than children aged 2-12 years. Girls were also found to be less active than boys and were involved in less intense activities.

In a world where we are increasingly conscious of our children's well-being, we need to also take an active interest in the daily level of physical activity our kids are getting and encourage them by participating ourselves.

Here are a few tips to help your children and adolescents become more physically active this summer:

- ?? Educate your children about the importance of being physically active. Encourage them to ride their bikes or walk to school or the park. Accompany them to ensure they are taking the safest route there.
- ?? Provide them with opportunities to learn lifelong skills such as swimming, soccer, baseball, cycling, hiking, dancing, gymnastics, and other fun activities. If it becomes a part of their lifestyle when they are young, they are likely to continue as they grow older.
- ?? Have them participate in both formal and informal opportunities to be physically active, especially for those who tend to shy away from competitive sports.
- ?? Involve them with daily chores that require activity such as washing the car, vacuuming, walking the dog, planting flowers, raking the lawn or sweeping the garage.
- ?? Focus your children's attention on fun and their skills rather than the outcome. Encourage participation rather than winning and competing.
- ?? Limit non-active time in front of the TV, or other sedentary activities.
- ?? Encourage your caregiver or daycare to involve children in physical activities as part of their daily routine.
- ?? **Be an "active living" family. Be active your way, every day, for life. Make it a "family affair" and have fun doing it.**

