



Northern Health Position on Sedentary Behaviour and Physical Inactivity

Northern Health aims to increase health and wellness and improve quality of life by promoting decreased sedentary behaviour and increased physical activity. Sedentary activity should be decreased and physical activity increased using a graduated approach with concomitant attention to injury prevention and functional limitation reduction. This aim will specifically be achieved by working with individuals and community partners to promote the following messages:

- Reduce overall sedentary behaviours.
- Increase incidental activity; emphasize that EVERY MOVE COUNTS!
- Any form of regular physical activity is important and beneficial.
- Using a graduated and individualized approach, increase activity levels to meet and exceed the minimum levels recommended by the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.
- More daily physical activity provides greater health benefits for all ages.

For further information, please refer to the complete Northern Health *Position Statement on Sedentary Behaviour and Physical Inactivity* available on the Northern Health web site: <http://northernhealth.ca> (About Us/Position Statements Addressing Risk Factors) or by using the following address: <http://northernhealth.ca/AboutUs/PositionStatementsAddressingRiskFactors.aspx>.

Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

Two sets of guidelines exist for different age groups: 5-11 years and 12-17 years. For each age group, the guidelines recommend a maximum amount of time that a person should spend as 'recreational screen time' and limit time spent sitting. Contrary to the Physical Activity Guidelines, the Sedentary Guidelines set maximum targets. Overall, the time spent being sedentary should be swapped with active time with assistance from parents, family members, as well as educators. They are available online at www.csep.ca/guidelines.

Children 5-11 Years & Youth 12-17 Years

- For health benefits, children and youth should minimize the time they spend being sedentary each day. This can be achieved by:
 - Limiting recreational screen time to no more than 2 hours per day; lower levels are associated with additional health benefits.
 - Limiting sedentary (motorized) transport, extended sitting and time spent indoors throughout the day.

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

Four sets of guidelines exist for different age groups: 5-11 years, 12-17 years, 18-64 years, and 65+ years. For each age group, the guidelines recommend a minimum amount of time that a person should be active in a given week, a recommendation for the level of intensity and type of activity. It is important to note that the recommendations are a minimum target. **Overall, more daily physical activity provides greater health benefits for all ages.** They are available online at www.csep.ca/guidelines.

Children 5-11 Years & Youth 12-17 Years

- For health benefits, children and youth should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. This should include:
 - Vigorous-intensity activities at least 3 days per week.
 - Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week.

Adults 18-64 Years and 65 Years and Older

- To achieve health benefits, adults should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.
- It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.
- Those with poor mobility should perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls.

A Graduated Approach

Blanket recommendations of “getting more exercise” can be ineffective.ⁱ A graduated approach allows individuals to assess and realize progression and provides encouragement to continue with healthy lifestyle behaviour changes. An individual can begin a graduated approach with any level of activity. The overall process encourages increasing physical activity duration or intensity over time. The process of becoming active needs to be emphasized and individually tailored.

- Make the process of increasing activity clear; recognize the individual’s starting point and level of readiness.
- Set incremental, **SMART** goals (SMART goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and are **T**ime-bound); set a ultimate or long-term goal.
- The provision of community based resources to assist individuals in generating a graduated action plan should be standardized (i.e. Healthy Families BC’s [Lifestyle Support Services](#)).

ⁱ Riddell, M. and J. Fowles. 2010. “How to treat prediabetes with exercise - effectively.” *Clinical Practice Guide*. November: 10-20.