



# Physical Activity

## Traditional Lifestyles

Traditionally, Aboriginal people led healthy, active lifestyles by hunting, fishing, gathering, cooking, preparing, and participating in traditional games and competitions such as lacrosse, wrestling, running, canoeing, archery, dancing, storytelling and singing (Hanna, 2008). Although these types of activities persisted for many generations, they have become less and less common which is evident in mounting social and health issues (Cochrane, 2008).

According to the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, only 21% of First Nations adults and 45% of youth get sufficient physical activity (at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity) for health benefits (First Nations Centre, 2005).

## What are the facts?

Canada's *Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* recommends 30 to 60 minutes of moderate exercise a day to maintain and improve health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003). Regular physical activity contributes to the prevention and control of several chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, bone and joint diseases (osteoporosis and osteoarthritis), depression, some cancers (breast and co-

lon cancer), and premature death (Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006).

Other benefits include feeling more energetic, sleeping better, stronger muscles and bones, increased self-esteem, reduced anxiety and stress, and an overall improvement in mental well-being (Fox, 1999). For children and youth specifically, these benefits also include opportunities for peer interaction (Bailey, 1999), increased social status (Chase & Drummer, 1992), and decreased loneliness (Page et al, 1992).

**Active living is important to every aspect of our health: physical, mental, spiritual and emotional.**

## Tips to Get Active

Canada's *Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* recommends trying to be a little more active each day by doing healthy activities that you are familiar with and that you enjoy (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003). If you haven't been active in awhile, it is important to start slowly and gradually progress towards physical activity goals that are meaningful to you. Involving friends and family in daily physical activity sessions is also a good way to socialize and stay motivated (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003).  
...over





### For more information

There are many organizations in BC that support physical activity from organized sport and coaching to advice on how to be more active each day. See the following links:

- Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Association [www.asra.ca](http://www.asra.ca)
- Aboriginal Youth FIRST [www.youthfirst.ca](http://www.youthfirst.ca)
- ActNow BC [www.actnowbc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.actnowbc.gov.bc.ca)
- BC Healthy Living Alliance [www.bchealthyliving.ca](http://www.bchealthyliving.ca)
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon [www.heartandstroke.bc.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.bc.ca)
- Honor Your Health Challenge [www.honouringourhealth.ca](http://www.honouringourhealth.ca)

### References

**Bailey, R.P. (1999).** "Play, health and physical development." In: T. David, ed., *Young Children Learning*. London: Paul Chapman Publishers

**Chase, M.A. and G.M. Drummer (1992).** The Role of Sports as a Social Status Determinant for Children. *Research for Exercise and Sport* 63: 418-424

**Cochrane, Nancy (2008).** BCAAFC: Aboriginal Sport, Recreation, and Physi-

cal Activity, Phase 1: Environmental Scan. Report prepared for the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

**First Nations Centre, NAHO (2005).** First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/03. Ottawa: First Nations Centre, NAHO.

**Fox, Kenneth. (1999).** The Influence of Physical Activity on Mental Well-Being. *Public Health Nutrition* 2(3a): 411-418

**Hanna, Rosalin (2008).** Sports in Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia. BC Initiatives for Aboriginal Health.

**National Indian & Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization (2006).** Come Meet the Challenge: Physical Activity & Nutrition Initiatives in Aboriginal Communities, Resource Guide 2006. NIICHO.

**Page, R.M., J. Frey, R. Talbert & C. Falk (1992).** Children's Feelings of Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction: Relationship to Measures of Physical Fitness and Activity. *Journal of Teaching and Physical Education* 11: 211-219

**Public Health Agency of Canada (2003).** Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living  
**Warburton, Darren E.R., Crystal Whitney Nicol, & Shannon S.D.**

**Bredin. (2006).** Healthy Benefits of Physical Activity: the evidence. *Canadian Medical Association journal* 174(6): 801-809



ABORIGINAL *Act Now*



Ministry of  
Healthy Living  
and Sport



ActNowBC