

New ParticipACTION Report Card Shows Families are Critical Influencers for Children’s Healthy Habits – But Support is Needed to Get Kids Moving

ParticipACTION Launches #ActiveFamilyPledge to empower parents to make family time “active time”

TORONTO, June 17, 2020 / CNW / ParticipACTION released its latest Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth today, identifying families as critical influencers in children’s physical activity and healthy habits. Right now, families are physically closer than they have been for generations, as many of us stay home to help contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Restricted access to playgrounds, physical school, childcare and playdates means the family’s impact has never been greater, but it’s also more challenging than ever to develop and maintain healthy habits at-home.

The ParticipACTION Report Card gives children and youth a D+ for Overall Physical Activity and D+ for Sedentary Behaviours.ⁱ Only 39% of children and youth in Canada meet the national physical activity guidelines of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day. Less than 1 in 5 children (5-11-year-olds) and youth (12-17-year-olds) in Canada are meeting national movement behaviour guidelines for physical activity, sedentary behaviours and sleep.ⁱⁱ

“Each additional 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity by a parent is associated with another 5 minutes in their child’s daily physical activity,” says Dr. Mark Tremblay, Chief Scientific Officer, ParticipACTION Report Card, and Senior Scientist with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group, Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute. “Regardless of how the family dynamic looks, family members are important role models for how young Canadians develop. That is why this year’s Report Card contains a comprehensive Consensus Statement, developed from experts around Canada, to help inform and guide families in practicing healthy movement behaviours together.”

A recent study commissioned by ParticipACTION to support the Report Card release found that only 4.8 per cent of children and 0.8 per cent of youth were meeting 24-hour movement behaviour guidelines during COVID-19 restrictions, compared to 15 per cent prior to the pandemic. The study also shows lower physical activity levels, less outside time and higher sedentary behaviour (including screen time) during the outbreak.

“The isolation and extended time indoors brought about by physical distancing measures can negatively impact our mental health and make it hard to think about getting off your couch and moving,” says Elio Antunes, President and CEO, ParticipACTION. “Now, more than ever, it’s important for families to navigate the boundaries of work and school while finding the opportunities to be active together. For adults and children alike, physical activity can do wonders for both our physical and mental health.”

Research shows parents who measure as “active” are more likely to have children who also measure as “active”.ⁱⁱⁱ That’s why ParticipACTION has launched the #ActiveFamilyPledge, a social media challenge empowering parents and caregivers to make quality time “active time” and identify themselves as an active family. Until June 30th, families who use the #ActiveFamilyPledge hashtag and tag @ParticipACTION along with a picture or video of how their family is staying active will have the chance to win 1 of 5 \$100 Sport Chek gift cards!

“Getting active doesn’t have to be complicated or expensive,” says Mr. Antunes. “The more families move, the more kids move, so we need to make physical activity a family priority. If being active is second nature for us as adults, it will in turn, become second nature for our children too.”

The following are three recommendations from the Report Card to help families get more active:

1. **Be an active role model:** Incorporate physical activity into daily routines and look for opportunities to be active as a family when possible. You can make the most of indoor time by trying at-home workouts, family dance parties and Pilates or yoga.
2. **Create a family media plan:** Set limits around screen viewing, prioritize screen-free family time and use “device baskets” (bins for personal mobile devices).
3. **Encourage outdoor time:** Spending time outdoors as a family according to physical distancing guidance is an easy and effective way to increase physical activity, improve mental health, decrease sedentary behaviour and improve sleep quality. Try getting some fresh air each day by going for a walk or even just doing yard work around the house.

It’s time to make physical activity a family priority and lead by example – not only for the next generation, but for our own as well. Visit ParticipACTION.com for the full Report Card and to learn how to join the #ActiveFamilyPledge. Families can also download the free ParticipACTION app for extra support and motivation to fit physical activity into their busy lives and get rewarded for doing so.

About the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

The ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth is the most comprehensive assessment of child and youth physical activity in Canada. The findings are applicable to all Canadian kids, regardless of gender, cultural background or socio-economic status, and serves as a guide for families to support healthy movement behaviours of children and youth.

The Report Card synthesizes data from multiple sources, including the best available peer-reviewed research, to assign evidence-informed grades across 14 indicators: Overall Physical Activity (D+); Sedentary Behaviour (D+); Active Play (F); Active Transportation (D-); Organized Sport (B); Physical Education (D+); Sleep (B); 24-Hour Movement Behaviours (F); Physical Literacy (D+); Physical Fitness (D); Household (C); School (B-); Community & Environment (B+); and Government (B-).

ParticipACTION’s strategic partner, the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute (HALO-CHEO), played a critical role in the research and development of the 2020 Report Card.

About ParticipACTION

ParticipACTION is a national non-profit organization that helps Canadians sit less and move more. Originally established in 1971, ParticipACTION works with its partners, which include sport, physical activity and recreation organizations as well as governments and corporate sponsors, to make physical activity a vital part of everyday life. For more information, please visit ParticipACTION.com.

For further information, copies of the ParticipACTION Child and Youth Report Card or to schedule an interview please contact: Max Monahan-Ellison, Proof Strategies Inc., mmonahanellison@getproof.com.

ⁱParticipACTION. (2020). Family influence: The Role of the Family in the Physical Activity, Sedentary and Sleep Behaviours of Children and Youth. Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth.

ⁱⁱ Statistics Canada. (2020). 2016-17 Canadian Health Measures Survey. Custom Analysis.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tremblay et al [Expert Panel]. (2020). Consensus Statement on the Role of the Family in the Physical Activity, Sedentary and Sleep Behaviours of Children and Youth.