

FAMILY TIME OUTDOORS

Here are some tips to get “out that door” as a family and enjoy! Being outdoors in nature strengthens your mental and physical health. This is beneficial for all ages. All movement throughout the day contributes to your daily physical activity requirements – a short walk, or day out, it all adds up.



Keep outings fun and enjoyable:

- Start with 10 mins outdoors nearby. Make it easy!
- Check out [forests](#), paths and trails in York Region
- Have you tried [orienteeing](#)? Join a club and pack your trail map and compass
- Try [geocaching](#) and join the world's largest outdoor treasure hunt
- Cycling, hiking and walking trails and routes are available for the [121-kilometre Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail](#)

Create memories and enjoy the simple moments nature gives us:

- Join in the fun with children. Adults benefit from outdoor playtime too.
- Notice when you're present and in the moment.
- Listen to the birds, look up for rainbows or stars, appreciate all your senses in nature
- Be curious about natural landscapes, insects, flowers, watersheds, tree stumps
- Get creative inspiration from nature – from trees to bees, see design and color
- Ask each other how you feel after getting fresh air and being active?

This material is provided by York Region Public Health. For more information on physical activity, please visit www.york.ca/healthyschools

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OUTDOOR FREE TIME



When children and youth are outside, they move more, get curious, and find joy. Interacting with nature has cognitive benefits. It helps restore our ability to concentrate and pay attention. It improves mood, focus, stress response.

Outdoor free time activities can include: developing the ability to use speed (run); use tools (build and construct); be near elements of nature (in the woods); rough-and-tumble play (wrestle); try different heights (climb a tree); and be free in their surroundings (play tag).

Benefits of increasing outdoor free time for children and youth:

- Gives them a place to make independent decisions and listen to their inner voice
- Promotes testing their own capabilities and finding their own limits
- Offers creative and physical challenges to develop confidence
- Gives freedom to socialize while doing an fun activity

How can you support more outdoor free time?

- Listen to this [Active for Life parent podcast](#) and get expert tips about how to give attention, check in and, intervene when children are outdoors
- Use [Outside Play parent resources](#) to discover and work through concerns related to giving time, space, and freedom to be active outdoors
- Get comfortable with allowing children to follow their own ideas without a defined purpose or outcome
- Watch and observe when children are happiest outdoors. They will let you know how amazing they are!

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WHAT IS THE PLAY PROGRAM?

Peer Leadership for Active Youth (PLAY)

The Peer Leadership for Active Youth (PLAY) Program is a whole school initiative that trains students in grades five to eight as student leaders to lead children in kindergarten to grade three in fun recess games and activities.

PLAY student leaders develop skills to promote physical activity at school while learning about leadership, communication, respect, conflict resolution and bullying prevention.

What are the Benefits?

The PLAY program supports the development of a positive and inclusive school environment. PLAY promotes positive mental health and well-being through physical activity and an increased sense of community during peer-led interactive games.

How does it work?

Recruited student leaders will learn and teach new games and skills, meet regularly to share ideas with their PLAY peers, and have fun leading games at recess on selected days under the supervision of a PLAY Champion.

Everyone can PLAY a part, including parents! If you're interested in volunteering for the PLAY Program, please contact your school. Let's all get active, have fun, and work together. The whole school community will benefit from the PLAY Program!



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THE WHOLE DAY FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-GET ACTIVE AND BUILD YOUR BEST DAY!



Keeping active throughout the day supports success in the classroom, on the field and with friends. Go for quick wins and non-competitive activities to keep moving.

The [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#) outlines current physical activity recommendations for children and youth. By including movement throughout the whole day, whether at school, home, or the community, getting 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity and several hours of varied light physical activity is doable!

Look for ways to balance the day with informal activities like gardening, raking leaves, or playing tag at the park. Participate in indoor or outdoor family chores. Choose walking, biking, or a scooter instead of taking the bus or car and make sure to wear protective gear. Encourage family members to park cars farther from the mall or grocery store entrance and take stairs instead of an elevator or escalator whenever possible.

Look for “active time” opportunities throughout the whole day. Set a positive example by being physically active as a family and support each other with lots of praise! For more information on physical activity visit york.ca/healthyschools.

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MINDFUL SCREEN TIME

Mindful screen time is all about balance. Encouraging children and youth to balance screen time with other activities like sports, hobbies and time with friends and family can help build healthy habits for the future.

Parents and caregivers can help with mindful screen time habits by setting good examples and providing guidance. Here are some tips you can try:

Create screen time rules together

- Talk and listen – work together to decide how to have mindful screen time
- Develop a plan the whole family can follow; review the plan every few months
- Try to include no more than two hours of recreational screen time per day
- Aim for less recreational screen time and more educational screen time
- Set time limits to help reduce periods of prolonged sitting
- Turn off screens when no one is using them
- Allow time for gradual changes in behaviour
- Turn off screens during mealtimes so you can enjoy talking and eating together
- Help your child set boundaries with social media and teach them to critically evaluate the messages they see in the media
- Be consistent and model healthy habits



Screens are a big part of our day, but there are many health benefits related to reducing screen time including boosting your mood and improving physical health. Learning to be mindful about screen time together can be good for the whole family!

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HELP YOUR KIDS TAKE A BREAK FROM SCREEN TIME

Taking a break from screens such as computers, television, video and hand-held devices can be a challenge. However, sitting for several hours a day can put children at risk for preventable health problems, including Type 2 diabetes, obesity and heart disease. According to the [24-Hour Movement Guideline for Children and Youth](#), recreational screen time for children should be limited to less than two hours per day.



Here are some tips for parents to help reduce screen time:

- Schedule daily screen-free playtime
- Spend time outdoors with family and friends
- Take 5 to 20 minutes active breaks
- Choose active modes of transportation to and from school

If the use of screens can't be avoided, try yoga, dance or exercise videos or playing video games with movement to incorporate physical activity into your child's day.

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