

***I HAVE NO TIME TO BE ACTIVE,
I HAVE TOO MUCH TO DO!***

Like many members of your generation, you never have enough time. This is the top reason given by Quebecers in surveys seeking to explain the trend towards a sedentary lifestyle. There is no denying that it is difficult to juggle work and family life! Scrambling to stop at school or daycare and still arrive at work on time. Knocking yourself out to make sure all members of the family keep up with their activities. Not to mention the endless, frustrating cycle of housework.

It is not surprising that parents between the ages of 25 and 44 are less active than childless people in the same age group. The problem is not a lack of interest; the majority of these parents say they are quite interested or very interested in doing physical activities with their family. Becoming and remaining active is certainly a challenge. How can you stand up to the challenge?

Kino-Québec proposes some ideas to help you reorganize your schedule in order to be active on a more regular basis and integrate physical activity into your daily life. By relying on your imagination, thinking of the pleasure you will get out of being more active and choosing activities that are easily accessible, you can succeed in rearranging your priorities.

BECOMING AND STAYING ACTIVE AS AN ADULT

Before continuing, answer the four questions below objectively. This will give you a measure of your interest in incorporating physical activity into your schedule.

1. Am I concerned about my physical fitness?
2. Would I do more physical activities if I could?
3. Do I have a good idea of what activities I would enjoy?
4. Can I take part in these activities near home or work?

Did you answer yes to all the questions? If so, you are one of the adults who would like to engage in physical activity on a more regular basis. But there's that old problem again: your schedule is full, and there are only 24 hours in a day! Don't give up. With a bit of ingenuity, it may be possible to free up some time, either at work or at home.

BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE MEANS:

- incorporating physical activity into everyday life in various ways
- feeling good about yourself and having pep and energy
- being fully present in the moment
- meeting people
- being proactive against the effects of age, stress and certain health problems (cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, some forms of cancer, depression, etc.)

This is not a miracle cure, but certainly an accessible, economical and enjoyable mean to take the doctor away!

EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITIES **AT WORK**

These days, work takes up a large part of our time. By analyzing your work habits and environment, you may find some ideas for including physical activities in your schedule.

Do you live near your place of work? Why not walk or bike to work? You live too far away? Leave your car a few streets from work or get off the bus three or four stops before the one nearest work.

Do you have enough time at lunch to take a walk and enjoy the fresh air or go to a nearby sports centre? Invite a co-worker to play badminton once a week, or to go for a walk during lunch hour every day. Having a partner may motivate you.

Do you live in a big city? Spend rush hour working out. You will be much more relaxed on the way home.

Forget the elevator, and use your own energy. In fact, take every available opportunity to increase your activity level.

NEVER MISS **A CHANCE** **TO BE ACTIVE**

LOOK FOR WAYS TO BE ACTIVE AT HOME

People have the most leisure time at home. Use that time to become and remain active.

Every season, make a list of the activities you like, and choose those that are the most convenient. Eliminate any activity you do not enjoy.

Some people on tight schedules get up early to work out or be active in some way. Obviously, not everyone wants to jog at 6 a.m. But you can set aside a few minutes every morning to do some weight training and stretching exercises.

Make an agreement with your partner to reserve one evening a week to practise a sport with your friends. Your partner can do the same thing on another evening. Other fathers and mothers probably have the same time shortage as you do. See if you can arrange to exchange babysitting services with friends or neighbours to free up some time for yourself. Book your babysitter so that you can have some time to engage in physical activity as a couple.

If you really enjoy watching television, be an "active watcher" by doing exercises during commercials.

Do your housework to lively music. You will spontaneously adopt a faster rhythm—and finish faster! Also, an equitable distribution of housework means that every member of the family does tasks, and every member has some time for physical activity.

USE WAITING TIME CONSTRUCTIVELY

Do your children participate in a lot of activities? Good for them! But what about you? Do you spend the time waiting patiently while they take swimming or gymnastics lessons or play soccer? Has it occurred to you that you can use this time to be active yourself? Choose activities that involve few constraints, such as walking around the neighbourhood, or skating. Stretch your legs.

Ask your municipality to provide access to an activity area for adults next to the one for children, so that you and other parents can put waiting time to better use.

CHOOSE ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE FEW CONSTRAINTS

PROPOSE PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES TO DO AS A FAMILY

Why not take advantage of family time to be active together? The possibilities are endless.

Do not bother trying to find an activity that everyone will like if your children cover a wide age range. Instead, choose a multipurpose play area. In a park, for example, the playground equipment, swings and sandbox are usually located near the tennis courts and ball field. Everyone can be active at the same time!

Go for a walk, skate or take a bike ride together after supper. It's invigorating and it strengthens family ties.

Participate in a basketball or hockey game organized by your children and their friends.

Create a skating rink or a slide in your back yard with your children and maybe even the neighbours, and take part in the fun with the children.

Turn a chore into a shared activity. The driveway needs shovelling? Leaves need raking? The garden needs weeding? Any time is the right time to be active!

Find out about physical activities for families organized by your municipality.

FOR THOSE WHO WANT A BIT MORE ACTIVITY

Perhaps you and your partner prefer more intense activities, and the family does not provide the right framework for these activities because your children are too young? During your next family activity, take turns being the parent on duty. For a predetermined period, one parent plays with the children, while the other bikes, swims, skies or runs as vigorously as he or she wants. When he or she returns, or during the next outing, the roles are reversed, to the satisfaction of both parents.

GO ON AN EXPEDITION NEAR HOME

On weekends, and during school holidays and summer vacations, take more ambitious expeditions and engage in more exciting activities. Bike to grandma's house, walk to the video store or go rollerblading on the bicycle path, all the way to the children's favourite restaurant. Choose a destination near home, at least for the first few outings. The easier it is to get to the place, the easier it will be to organize and carry out the expedition. The least complicated activities are the most successful.

Whether you live in the country or the city, your environment is full of places for family expeditions. There are lakes, pools and streams, green spaces, trails, bike paths, park sites with services—all sorts of places to explore. Do not forget to bring something to eat and drink; small children get hungry and thirsty fast, and you do not want your outing to turn into a nightmare.

Introduce your children to the great outdoors by taking them canoeing, hiking in the forest, climbing or snowshoeing.

Taking part in festivals and popular celebrations is an excellent way to enjoy yourself while being active. Take the whole family to a local Snowflake Festival or Bicycle Day.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: GUIDELINES

No matter how good your intentions, you will not succeed if the physical activities you choose for your family do not correspond to your children's interests and abilities.

It is important to realize that despite a rise in girls' level of physical activity over the past decade, they still tend to be less active than boys. The gap widens during adolescence. The competitive aspect of many sports attracts fewer girls. Generally speaking, they prefer to do physical activities to get in shape or for social reasons or the pleasure of the activity; they are oriented more to cooperation than competition. Girls are also sometimes less active because they have not developed their basic motor skills (running, throwing, catching, jumping, etc.) and thus lack the self-confidence required, for example, to participate in team sports. You must take all of these factors into account in choosing opportunities for your children to engage in physical activities.

Parental support is important for all your children. The three key ways in which parents can influence their children are by encouraging them, participating with them and ensuring that physical activities are pleasurable by providing agreeable conditions in which to do them. The following table provides some guidelines.

AGE GROUP	AGE GROUP PROFILE	COMMENTS FOR ADULTS
0 to 2 years	Their participation in physical activities is limited, but they adore discovering the world from their stroller, a sled or a baby carrier.	Providing transportation for your children will keep you active. In winter, watch out for frostbite.
2 to 6 years	They love imitating, jumping, walking and climbing. Organize an obstacle course or games involving skill and manipulation to develop their basic skills. They enjoy playing and having fun more than anything else.	Physical activities will be less intense for adults with children in this age group. Be sure to do your own physical activities to stay in good physical condition.
6 to 8 years	Their imagination is very fertile at this age. Let the games they invent be your guide. They like to hang, climb, run, throw, and catch, and they perform their activities more energetically than younger children. You can begin to introduce them to the rudiments of ball games.	This is a good age to begin outdoor activities (hiking, biking, skiing, etc.). Include games, discoveries or nature interpretation to keep things interesting.

AGE GROUP	AGE GROUP PROFILE	COMMENTS FOR ADULTS
8 to 11 years	They like to participate in vigorous—even rough—games. It’s normal! And they expend a lot of energy. Children this age tend to prefer physical activities in small groups with partners of the same sex.	When you play with your children, give them a chance to win. It will boost their self-confidence. You will derive more benefits from your family physical activity sessions, as they will be more intense (you may sometimes have difficulty keeping up with your children at this stage). Take advantage of every opportunity to be active with children of this age, for once they reach adolescence they will prefer to go out with their friends than with their parents.
11 to 13 years	They are growing fast. Suggest games that improve control, dexterity and coordination, such as table tennis, badminton and sports that involve throwing balls. Individual activities are also popular at this age: swimming, skating, skateboarding, etc.	This is a critical phase, when a large proportion of children abandon physical activities. You can influence them indirectly. Encourage them to continue their activities by providing an active family environment. If they stop doing certain activities, help them to understand why they no longer want to do them and to find other physical activities they might like better.
13 to 15 years	If you do not want to lose track of your adolescents, let them participate in the choice and preparation of activities. They are looking for adventures, stimulating challenges and models. Could you be one of their models?	Go away for a weekend of biking, cross-country skiing or a canoe trip. Facing challenges together will strengthen your ties. You might also invite friends of your adolescent to participate in your family’s physical activities from time to time. This will make them infinitely more interesting.

GADGETS AND MOTIVATION: IT WORKS!

There is a whole array of gadgets designed to help with your physical activities and boost your motivation. Here are just a few.

A pedometer records and displays the number of steps you take, letting you see just how much walking you do, whether during the course of your normal routine, your expeditions in town or your rambles through the woods. Although a pedometer does not give you a complete picture of the extent of your physical activity, it does give you a fairly good idea of the distance you cover on foot.

A heart-rate monitor usually consists of a wrist-receiver and a chest strap transmitter. It lets you measure your heart rate in real time so you can compare it with a target heart rate. In addition to the traditional features (chronometer, alarm, countdown), most of the recent models display the estimated number of calories burned. Some models can also be hooked up to accessories that show your number of steps, speed and distance covered. Others can even plug into a computer that records the data, making it easier to chart your progress.

Downloadable applications for smart phones offer training programs (aerobics, bodybuilding), record your activities (cycling, running, cross-country skiing, etc.) in real time and display your route on a map. The geocaching applications in particular are a lot of fun. Geocaching is a treasure hunt in which participants use GPS technology to find or hide an object.

Although they cannot replace traditional physical activity, computer-based physical activity games provide some really fun exercises that are great if you want to be active without braving the outdoors.

Now get going!

PLEASURE AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

If happy people have no stories to tell, active people have no secrets! Every day, at work or at home, alone, as couples or as families, people set aside time for pleasant physical activities that give them energy, motivation and personal satisfaction.

Your physical activity does not have to be extremely intense to be worthwhile. Every day, put in a few precious minutes of activity. For a sedentary person, any increase in the level of physical activity, even small, has a big impact. And the more you do, the better! Medical authorities suggest that doing at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity almost every day will give you significant health benefits. For example, a 15-minute bicycle ride, a 20-minute walk, a visit to the park with the children, an impromptu basketball game with your son and his friends, a weekly badminton match with co-workers, a half-hour of skating with your partner, a walk to work—all these activities add up to make you an active person.

Adopting an active lifestyle will provide many physical and psychological benefits and it will make you want to be active on a regular basis. This will enable you to be a positive role model for your children. Children in active families learn the pleasure of being active. Young children have a chance to develop the basic motor skills they need to practise various sports: running, throwing, catching, jumping, etc. Providing opportunities to develop through play is a fine gift to give your child.

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