

Lifestyle Tips



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Get outside and get active!

We have all experienced a moment when the simple act of leaving our home or workplace and getting outside has raised our spirits and cleared our mind. These emotional benefits also ring true for kids, with recent studies showing that when children are exposed to nature and the outdoors they are happier, have more energy and are less anxious.

Beyond the benefits to our mental health, spending more time outside is also associated with increased physical activity. In fact, children who play outside after school rather than spending that time indoors, accumulate significantly greater levels of physical activity. Studies show that 5-19 year-olds who play outside between the time school ends and supper take approximately 2,000 more steps per day than those who do not play outdoors in the afterschool period. This translates into roughly an additional 2 kilometres of movement per day!

Getting active outside does not necessarily mean venturing off deep into the Canadian wilderness. The urban outdoors also offers many of



the same mind-clearing and muscle-building benefits. Here are some easy ways to make being outside part of your life.

Walk to your destination! Or bike, scooter, or rollerblade. However you

chose to get there, make active transportation part of your family's day. Walking or biking to school can be a great way to spend uninterrupted time with your children.

Try a new outdoor sport. Some



structured sports like soccer, baseball and football make it easy to schedule in outdoor physical activity. But there are loads of unstructured sports to try that can get the whole family outside. How about giving snowboarding, skiing and snowshoeing a go in the cold winter months and basketball, swimming or tennis a try in the summer months?

Make fun family time outdoor time. Unstructured outdoor play such as walking the dog, playing in the park,

or biking after dinner in the good weather are all ways to enjoy being outside together.

Get kids to help with housework outside such as gardening and washing the car. Somehow, outdoor chores just seem more fun than vacuuming!

Take in the wilderness. For the more adventurous, hiking and canoeing are great, nature-based, physical activities. Set out into the wilderness and try camping and backpacking. If you can't go that far afield, find

local and provincial parks that offer day hikes and nature-based activities. Activities offered are as fun and far-reaching as dog-sledding in winter or an evening "owl prow!" in the spring.

Whether it is in the backyard, at a local park, or on a mountain top, just get outside and get active!

