



PUT DOWN THOSE SCREENS AND TO PAUSE TO PLAY!

Each April, York Region Public Health hosts an annual *Pause to Play* Challenge in York Region schools. Children are challenged to put their TV's, gaming devices, tablets and computers on "pause" for one full week and are encouraged to participate in active outdoor play.

Did you know?

- According to the [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#), children ages five to 17 years old should limit the time they spend being inactive each day. What counts as being inactive?
 - Sitting for prolonged periods (e.g., at a desk)
 - Using motorized transportation (e.g., bus or car)
 - Watching TV
 - Playing passive video games
 - Using the computer
 - Surfing on social networks (e.g., YouTube, Instagram)
- According to the [2024 ParticipACTION Report Card for Children and Youth](#), only 27% of children and youth met the recommended recreational screen time limit of no more than two hours per day
- Physical activity like active outdoor play contributes to the mental, social, and emotional well-being of children. Play allows children to use their creativity and imagination, develop new skills that lead to greater confidence, learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to speak up for themselves
- According to the [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#), a healthy 24 hours includes:
 - **SWEAT:** At least 60 minutes of **moderate to vigorous physical activity**
 - **STEP:** Several hours of a variety of **light physical activities**
 - **SLEEP:** Nine to 11 hours of **uninterrupted sleep**
 - **SIT:** No more than two hours of **recreational screen time & limited sitting** for extended periods

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Things to consider

- **Having a small healthy snack about an hour before playing outside** can give children the energy they need to play hard and focus better. Ideally this snack is high in carbohydrates and protein, and low in fat like cheese and crackers, yogurt and fruit, or half a turkey sandwich. If the snack is too high in fat some children may experience stomach problems.
- **Children should be adequately hydrated before going out to play.** Water is a healthy option to satisfy thirst. Your child should drink enough so they are not thirsty, but don't need to go the washroom (usually ½ to one cup right before active play).
- **Be aware of the weather.** Consider the temperature, humidex, wind chill, UV index, air quality index and weather warnings. Being dressed for the weather is the first step to enjoying the outdoors. If the weather is:
 - Hot and humid: play in the shade or at cooler times of the day
 - Sunny: wear a bucket hat, cover up, play in the shade, put on sunscreen, and wear sunglasses
 - Cold and windy: wear layers topped off with a hat (that covers ears), scarf, mittens, bib snow pants, a windproof jacket, and insulated waterproof boots
 - Wet and rainy: wear waterproof boots, rain coat with hood and rain pants with elastic or Velcro fastenings at the cuff
 - Poor air quality: play actively indoors until it improves
- Research shows families who eat together tend to eat more nutritious meals. Use mealtimes as a time to talk about your day or plan an activity you will do as a family when you are done eating. **Turn screens off during meals — make meal time family time.**
- **Offer fun alternatives to screen time.** Often children watch screens because they don't know what else to do. If you want your child to turn off the screen, suggest playing a board game, starting a game of hide and seek or playing outside. You could also stock rooms with a TV, computer or other devices with non-screen entertainment (books, toys, puzzles, board games, etc.).

For information on the *Pause to Play* Challenge visit york.ca/PausetoPlay