

Make Room for Play Campaign Aims to Get Children Moving

Hastings and Prince Edward Counties/March 12, 2015 - Local organizations across Hastings and Prince Edward Counties are ready to help families “make room for play”. This ParticipACTION campaign will be promoted locally between March 23 and June 1, with the goal of encouraging families and caregivers to decrease children’s screen time (television, video games, tablets and computers) and increase active play time. For a baby, active play may include supervised tummy time, rolling over or reaching for soft objects. For a child, it may include running, jumping and exploring in a safe place outdoors.

“Many people believe that toddlers and young children are naturally active, but with all the media influences today, that is often no longer the case,” says Jennifer Ronan, Public Health Nurse at the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit. “We need to be aware of how much time our children spend sitting and ensure that they get lots of time for active play. As children get older, we need to ensure that their play includes activities that get their heart rates up.”

Today, the average 3- and 4-year-old spends almost six hours a day engaged in sedentary behaviours. These are activities that require very little physical movement and are proving to have an impact on children’s health and development. For example, more than 90% of children begin watching TV before the age of 2, despite [national guidelines](#) recommending no screen time for this age group.

The Make Room for Play campaign encourages all of us to make an effort to turn off the screens and put down the devices more often. Taking the time to actively play with our children and provide them with opportunities to be physically active will not only improve their health, but will also provide them an opportunity to learn key movement skills.

“Locally, about one in three children in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties is below expectations in the areas of gross and fine motor skill development,” says Wendy Anderson, Children and Youth Services Network Coordinator. “We believe that encouraging active play can help children develop better motor skills like jumping and catching a ball, and this will help them be better prepared for school.”

The local Make Room for Play campaign is sponsored by the Healthy Communities Partnership, which is made up of organizations and individuals who have a commitment to enhancing the health of people living in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. The Partnership is part of a province-wide initiative funded by the Government of Ontario, which aims to provide greater opportunities to work together to build communities that make healthy eating and active living easier.

For more information on the Make Room for Play campaign or physical activity in the early years, visit the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit website at www.yourhealthunit.ca.

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