

# Urgent action needed

Think back to when you were a child. You most likely walked or rode your bike everywhere, did regular PE and played actively after school and in the weekend. In a short space of time this typical childhood picture has changed dramatically. Many children today are no longer sufficiently active to remain healthy and develop to their true potential.

Findings from the 2002 National Children's Nutrition Survey highlight some of the trends that are influencing current activity levels in children.

- 27% of children watch more than two hours of television per day
- 50% children are transported to and from school
- One in five children (5-10 years) and one in 10 children (11-14 years) are missing out on physical education classes
- 12.5% children are doing no weekend physical activity

Being active in today's society is a challenge, especially for children. Modern conveniences, technology and safety concerns have had a significant impact. Urgent action is needed to help children be more active. We need to be innovative as parents and teachers to combat inactivity.

**Below are some ideas on how to get kids moving more.**

1. Put together a "family physical activity" plan. As part of the plan, come up with a list of physical activities that everyone can enjoy together. Identify some key times to be active (preferably everyday) and commit to it.
2. Get support and credible advice. There are a number of organisations with trained, qualified staff that can provide you with physical activity ideas and advice. For more information contact Sport Canterbury on 373 5060 or the YMCA on 366 0689.
3. Some children do not like sport or have had a negative experience during PE. You can help your child overcome negative feelings by encouraging them into activities they enjoy. Discuss ideas with your child's teacher.
4. Limit 'screen' time (see box).
5. Be a positive role model by doing regular exercise yourself. Play with your children (e.g. help them practice) on a regular basis.

## Physical activity recommendations for children and young people

- Children should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day.
- Children should not spend more than 2 hours a day using electronic media for entertainment (e.g. computer games, Internet, TV).