

Healthy Teens

February 2018 Parent Newsletter



Activity Trackers: Are they Useful?

There has been a rise in the popularity of physical activity trackers. Currently, 38% of Albertans own a physical activity tracker. These wearable devices let users track their steps, heart rate, calories burned, and even sleep patterns every day.

Activity trackers have been shown to motivate individuals, including teenagers, to be more active. However, they should be monitored by parents so you can help interpret results and offer positive feedback. The emphasis should be on having fun and not things like number of calories burned or hitting 10,000 steps every day. Being active during your

teenage years should focus on doing activities you enjoy, engaging with your peers and improving overall mental health.

As parents, you are often finding creative ways to encourage your teenager to be more active. By providing positive physical activity experiences and encouraging structured and unstructured activity, you're on the right path to developing a healthier teen. If using a physical activity tracker gets your teen active and having fun, it is a win-win.

Let's encourage our teens to be active and more importantly, let's be good role models for them.

Articles

Activity Trackers – Are they Useful?

Healthy Sleep: Is it Time for a Wake-up Call?

Health Advice is as easy as 8-1-1

Did you know you can get trusted health advice around the clock from a registered nurse by dialing Health Link at 8-1-1?

Health Link is Alberta's free 24/7 health information and advice line. They can help assess symptoms and help you decide if you need to seek medical attention.



Healthy Sleep

Is it time for a wake-up call?

Getting a good night's sleep is not always easy for teens, but it is essential for physical and mental health. Regular quality sleep contributes to our well-being by:

- Enhancing thinking, learning and memory
- Improving emotional regulation and resilience
- Improving immune system function

Lack of sleep can leave teens so tired that it's hard to concentrate, make decisions or get things done. Students struggle with verbal creativity, problem solving and generally score lower on IQ tests with reduced sleep; they might also feel sad, anxious, stressed or grumpy.

Everyone is different and some people need more sleep than others. Canadian sleep recommendations are that 5–13-year-olds need 9–11 hours of sleep per night and 14–17-year-olds need 8–10 hours of sleep per night. You know your teen is getting enough sleep when they don't feel tired or drowsy during the day.



Physical activity and sleep are closely related. Small changes to your teen's daily physical activity routine can make a big impact on sleep quality. Regular physical activity helps us fall asleep faster, spend more time in deep sleep and awaken less often during the night.

Here are a few tips to support your teen in getting quality sleep:

- Maintain a regular sleep-and-wake schedule
- Use the bedroom only for sleeping
- Keep the bedroom dark and free of distractions (e.g. TV and devices)
- Avoid large meals and stimulants before bed (e.g. caffeine, screen time)

- Take time to relax before bed (e.g. read, take a bath or listen to calming music)
- Meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises and progressive muscle relaxation (alternately tensing and releasing muscles) can help to counter anxiety and racing thoughts for those who have trouble falling asleep.

Good sleep sets the stage for a good day at school. A refreshed brain helps improve our mood, decision-making and social interactions – all 'must haves' for a healthy student.