

by Don Zabloski

Active Kids

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice for Your Family by Don Zabloski

Start a new family tradition: get your play-out clothes on, no sitting, just standing and take turns reading a few lines of my column. New readers may need some help, but that's okay; new exercisers need help as well.

After each family member reads their section, break into spontaneous activity for a short but fun active play period, e.g., 30, 60, 90, 120 seconds or more. You'll notice some spontaneous activity ideas to use or make up your own. They should include some healthy snack and drink choices as well to keep up your energy levels for the reading and play-out periods. The reader gets to choose and lead the spontaneous activity. Turn on the music of each person's choice, make up some active songs, invite friends, another family, extended family. Contact another family online, text your moves, send active photos as each family reads and is active together. Family teams, neighbourhood teams or community teams. Sounds like an active flash mob. Is YouTube a possibility? Have FUN and enjoy your active read. Here we go! By the way, as I write this article, I'm breaking into spontaneous activity as well. As caregivers this is a great time for role modeling both reading and exercising together.

Spontaneous Activity: Walk, run, skip or jump on the spot for 30, 60, 90, 120 seconds or more. Try by yourself and then join hands and walk together. Keep those arms moving as well.

New Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology has released the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. These guidelines provide a MINIMUM target for kids of all ages to gain substantial health benefits. If you choose more than 60 minutes per day you will receive greater health benefits. The guidelines refer to levels of intensity or how hard a person is playing during the activity.

Moderate activity: you can talk, but not sing your favourite song. You're playing hard enough to raise your heart rate—put your hand on your heart after each spontaneous activity.

Vigorous activity—you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit.

Spontaneous Activity

Dance to your favourite steps: hip hop, grapevine, Zumba, high-step your way around the play area. Check your heart rate.

Children (5 to 11 years) and Youth (12 to 17 years)

> for health benefits: 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity EACH day

> vigorous activities: three days/week

> strength activities for muscle and bone: 3 days/week

Spontaneous Activity

Time for a family conga line. Line up one behind each other and hold onto the person's waist in front of you. Snake your conga line through all of the rooms in your home. Change the leader. Sing a song if you can.

Adults (18 to 64 years)

> for health benefits: 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activity/week in bouts of 10 minutes or more

> add muscle and bone strengthening activities two days/week

Spontaneous Activity

Show your best yoga poses. Take turns leading and following. Notice a different heart rate?

Older Adults (65 years and older)

> for health benefits and improved functional abilities: 150 minutes/week of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity/week in bouts of 10 minutes or more

> add muscle or bone strengthening activities two days/week

Spontaneous Activity

Walk/run up and down a set of stairs or do step ups on the first step. We may need some faster music for this one. Take your heart rate and try to say a few words.

Children (5 to 11 years)

Moderate/Vigorous: active games, tag games, playground games, cycling, jumping rope, martial arts, ice or field hockey, basketball, swimming, cross country skiing.

Strength: swinging on playground equipment, rope or tree climbing, tug of war, dyna bands for resistance.

Spontaneous Activity

March to the kitchen for a healthy drink of tap water and a piece of refreshing fruit. Talk about how you feel, why healthy choices make you feel good. March back to your play area. Bring some water with you.

Youth (12 to 17 years)

Moderate/vigorous—active running based games like flag football, cycling, hiking, skateboarding, rollerblading, playground activities, yard work, pushing a lawn mower, baseball, softball

Strength: wall climbing, dyna bands, hand weights, modified pushups and curl-ups

Spontaneous Activity

Bundle up and go outside to build a snowman or snow fort or have a friendly snowball throw. Invite other neighbourhood families. Who is bringing the hot chocolate? This may take at least 60 minutes of fun vigorous



About Don

Don is now writing for us from the beautiful and active city of Victoria, B.C. The good weather year round provides a very healthy and vibrant location for all ages to enjoy the ocean and mountain environments. Don walks, runs or cycles daily with his wife Diane. He will continue to write about the benefits of a healthy active lifestyle for families through the Active Kids articles.



activity. This is a good time to clean up your walks and driveways of snow, or help a needy neighbour.

Adults (18 to 65 years)

Moderate/Vigorous: walking briskly to race walking, running at various paces, water aerobics, ballroom dancing, swimming laps, cycling at various paces, jumping rope, general to heavy gardening—digging or hoeing. Strength: lifting weights, dyna bands, push-ups, heavy gardening.

Spontaneous Activity

Play active charades by showing a variety of winter activities. Guess the activity and do the activity. Take turns sharing a charade or two or three. Faster heart rates are required!

Seniors (65 years and older)

Moderate/Vigorous: walking for exercise from brisk to faster uphill maybe with a backpack, water aerobics, cycling, dancing, swimming, general gardening to heavy gardening.

Strength: lifting weights, dyna bands, body weight exercises—pushups, sit-ups, digging and shovelling for gardening

The full guidelines including background reading for adults can be viewed at www.csep.ca/guidelines. (Spring Running/Walking Healthy Family Choices).

Congratulations to all primary caregivers who may already be preparing for a spring or summer run/walk event by participating in one of the many Running Room training programs that are offered through every single store across Canada and the United States. Many of these community events include kids and family together run/walks. Usually the events are timed perfectly for family members to cheer each other on prior to or after completing their own chosen event.

Included are a few support reminders when starting out as a family.

Spontaneous Activity

Play a game of tag, indoors or outdoors. If someone gets tagged they join as a tagger. How's your heart doing?

The goal is to stay together as a family.

Not everyone will move at the same pace; it's important to genuinely support each other. Movement choices may vary: skipping, walking, running and hopping as well as stopping to look at bugs, watching birds, jumping in puddles or playing in a park.

After each family run/walk together, those family members who need to can continue at their own pace and distance.

For preschoolers, their run/walks will be through natural free play of at least two hours per day. This time can occur all at once or in shorter bouts throughout the day. Sometimes by themselves and other times with an adult. This is true discover run/walk time.

Children (5 to 11 years) can practise their running as part of free play and sport. Playing tag and other chasing games, short bursts with walking in between. They should experience using more of their body than just straight line running, e.g., running

while kicking or throwing a ball; a variety of run, jump, throw activities. Two kilometres or less would be a good distance to progress towards.

Spontaneous Activity

How many muscle building exercises with your own body can you do for 30 seconds? Try a plank position, modified or full. Plank—support yourself on your forearms (knees) and toes of both feet, nice and long. Children should be able to hold a full or modified plank before attempting pushups. Can you think of any more exercises to hold for 30 seconds?

Youth (12 to 17 years) can include walk/runs with other activities. Playing sports and going for a run as part of training is natural. This is the time when they should enjoy walk/runs with their friends and family as part of a daily lifestyle choice. Distances can vary from 3K, 5K, 10K events.

Additional assistance can be found by viewing past Active Kids articles at www.runningroom.com. Also look at a new Discover Running Activity Log (see page 13) put together by John Stanton for a special Discover Running event held in Vancouver, B.C., with the B.C. Children's Hospital and Save On Foods.

The Activity Log includes examples of stretching exercises for warm-ups and cool-downs; reminders about proper breathing techniques; running/walking form; and a 10-week training log/schedule for youth that starts with setting a few goals and recording the date, distance, time, location and thoughts. The schedule encourages three activity days per week with a rest day in between and participants will be introduced to the successful one minute walk strategy.

Hope you had fun taking turns reading and exercising together. I did.

See you at one of the upcoming community run/walk events this spring and summer. ❖