



CANCER

Activity and Exercise

Physical strength and endurance are central to First Nations culture



Traditional First Nations stories include many tales of physical strength, journeys for love, heroic rescues and long hunts.

Part of the path to First Nations well-being is restoring the pride in living strong, active lives.

Daily activity

Today, most Canadians live sedentary lives. Our daily work is often less active. Some people spend long hours at a computer screen, desk or assembly line. Leisure time is less active.

All Canadians—young and old— benefit from a physically active, healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, that is not the case for many of us. Poor nutrition, inactivity, childhood obesity and declining fitness are common. On-reserve First Nation adults (both women and men) are less likely to be physically active compared to off-reserve First Nation and non-Aboriginal adults.



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The impact of inactivity

Smoking has a greater effect on our health than poor diet, physical inactivity and obesity do.

Fifty years ago, First Nations people were more active and had less cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes than now. Moderate to vigorous physical activity decreases the risk of uterine cancer, as well as two of the most common cancers—breast and bowel.

First Nations people in Ontario are significantly more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to experience diabetes. Diabetes—especially when it is not treated early—causes other conditions, such as kidney disease and loss of vision.

Small changes can make a big difference

Regular physical activity and a healthy lifestyle can help prevent and manage disease.

Being active reduces stress and your chance of disease, and can help prevent and manage many long-term conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and arthritis. It is never too late to start.

Include all 3 types of activity in your plan

1. Aerobic activity makes your heart and lungs work harder. It uses large muscle groups. Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Children should get at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.

2. Strengthen your muscles and bones at least 2 days a week. This helps to improve your posture, balance and muscle strength. Strength training activities should work all the major muscle groups of your body (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders and arms).

3. Flexibility through daily stretching exercises will improve joint flexibility and keep muscles limber. Even if you are fairly active, simple daily stretches of the neck, shoulder, wrists, hands, hips, knees, ankles and back takes our joints through the full range of motion to keeps them flexible and healthy.