

Be Proactive with Exam Time Stress

Is it exam time? Are your children anxious or stressed about upcoming exams or with the pressure of school? Research shows a strong link between regular physical activity and improved mental health and academic performance. When we are active, our muscle cells get stronger in the heart, in our limbs and in our brains. Being physically active also increases blood flow to the brain, helping us to better understand and learn new concepts and ideas.

One of the best reasons to be physically active is that it is fun. Engaging in physical activity provides an opportunity to get away from the stresses and strains of everyday life. Whatever activities your child chooses – and whether they do it in a group or on their own, indoors or out – they are likely to benefit physically, socially, mentally and emotionally.

Regular physical activity can lift their mood, help them deal with negative emotions (such as frustration and anxiety) and bring a general sense of mental wellbeing. It can help them sleep better, reduce tension levels, feelings of stress or fatigue, and give them more energy. All of this can help when taking exams or dealing with the day-to-day stress of being a student.

Children (5-11 years) and youth (12-17 years) should accumulate at least **60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity** daily. *Moderate-intensity* physical activities will cause a child's heart to beat faster than normal; they will breathe more deeply while still being able to carry on a short conversation but not be able to sing (e.g., biking, playground activities). *Vigorous-intensity* physical activities will cause a child's muscles and heart to work harder and they will be unable to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath (e.g., running, swimming).

Tips for parents:

- The 60 minutes of daily recommended activity does not have to be all at once, but can be accumulated throughout the day.
- Encourage your children to walk, bike or skateboard to school or when visiting their friends. Encourage children to get off the bus or out of the car a few blocks from home or school so they can get some walking time.
- Encourage your family to get active together.
- After school and in the evening, encourage children and youth to connect with friends in person and be active instead of only communicating with them online.



High Fives for Healthy Teachers!

Schools have been supporting student health for years but what about staff wellness? Just as wellness is important for student success, it is also important for staff success. Healthier staff have better mental health, improved moods, and more patience when working with students. Teachers are also important role models for students when it comes to healthy behaviours. Here some ways that you can support staff wellness at your child's school:

- Support teacher's professional development that includes wellness.
- Recognize healthy habits you see in the school. If you see a teacher running to work, give that guy or gal a high five!
- If you have a special skill or knowledge related to wellness, share it with the school.
- Do you want to thank the staff for a job well done? Steer clear of donuts and choose gifts that support health instead (e.g., gift card to a bookstore, hand soap, fruit basket).
- Send a thank you note to a good role model in your child's school.
- Take care of your own wellness to be a positive example for teachers and students.

The people who work in our schools care for our most precious resources, our children; let's make sure they are able to give their best by showing that we care about their health too. **High Fives for Healthy Teachers!**