

ACTIVELY ENGAGING WOMEN AND GIRLS

Recommendations for Families and Caregivers to Support Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

Parents, partners, family members and caregivers can support women's and girls' involvement in sport and physical activity in a multitude of ways.

1. EDUCATE YOURSELF – Invest time to learn about the psycho-social factors influencing women and girls, and how to reduce the barriers affecting their participation and optimal performance. Recognize the important role you play – become informed so you are prepared to take action.

2. START YOUNG – Encourage and enable girls to move and express themselves physically through active play and participation in sport and physical activity. Ensure she develops physical literacy and a foundation for life-long participation through quality physical education, physical activity and sport programs. Consider the toys and games you buy or use and the messages they send – choose toys and games that promote physical activity, rather than sedentary behaviour.

3. SUPPORT HER – Take both active and supportive roles in female family members' sport and physical activity involvement.

- Be active together, playing active games, going for a hike, practicing skills, or training for competition.
- Provide opportunities to participate and develop skills in a variety of sport and physical activities to broaden her interests, and reduce the risks associated with being inactive or specializing too early.
- Talk to her about her interests, and listen to her successes and challenges.
- Provide transportation to and from programs, practices, and games.
- Invest in quality equipment and clothing to ensure proper size, fit and comfort.
- Attend her sport and physical activity events to cheer her on; provide positive feedback and support.

4. MAKE THE TIME – Ensure female family members have time in their lives to be active – support a healthy balance between work, domestic responsibilities, homework, and their sport and physical activity participation. Often women and girls prioritize their needs below those of others. However, participation provides a number of benefits that can enhance their performance and involvement in other areas of life, including productivity and stress reduction.

5. TALK ABOUT THE BENEFITS – Promote the variety of benefits of involvement in sport and physical activity, including fun, social networks, skill development, decreased stress, leadership and career

opportunities, travel, etc. While weight loss can be an initial motivator, encourage them to reflect on the other outcomes of their participation.

6. DON'T FOCUS ON BODY SIZE AND SHAPE – Avoid comments about body size and shape; instead, celebrate female family members' skill, strength and spirit. Recognize that body image and body weight can be a source of stress and pressure for females, especially since they often internalize comments about their bodies, interpreting them as reflections on their personalities or self-worth. Learn about potential psychological, social and physical issues for underweight, overweight and obese women and girls, and be prepared to support them.

7. ENCOURAGE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES – Encourage women and girls to become leaders in sport and physical activity, as volunteers, coaches and officials. Support their participation in certification and leadership development courses. Talk to girls and young women about careers and volunteer opportunities in Canada's sport and physical activity system as a way to stay involved in an activity they love.

8. CONNECT WITH ROLE MODELS – Introduce women and girls to female athletes, coaches, officials, and sport and physical activity leaders at the community, provincial/territorial, national and inter-national levels. They are inspirational role models for the whole family.

9. BE A CHAMPION – Actively support women and girls in your community. Consider gender equity in programs, events, facilities, equipment, quality coaching, leadership opportunities, media coverage, recognition of success, etc. Question policies and practices that limit women's and girls' participation and leadership in sport and physical activity, and throughout Canadian society.

10. JOIN THE MOVEMENT – Become part of the Canadian Sport for Life movement to benefit from and contribute to the ongoing evolution of quality program ideas and lessons, improving sport and physical activity for women and girls.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

CS4L: A Sport Parent's Guide, and Developing Physical Literacy
www.sportforlife.ca



www.womenandsport.ca



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