

Media Release

Children Need Opportunities for Outdoor Play!

April 26 - **For immediate release –District Wide**

Children and youth need to get outside now more than ever!

In one generation, there has been a significant decline in children's physical activity levels along with parents' comfort level to allow their children to play independently outside. Concerns of child safety and screen time use seem to be large factors in this trend.

There are huge benefits to letting children play outside without adult interference. Not only do children get the benefits of fresh air and movement, they also learn valuable life and social skills. Play doesn't have to be as safe as possible, just as safe as necessary.

It's important to recognize the difference between a hazard and a risk. Hazards are dangers that could seriously injure a child and are beyond a child's ability to recognize. A risk is a challenge a child can learn to manage by choosing to approach it and deciding their own limits.

"Parents are generally aware of their child's abilities and limitations," says Public Health Promoter Crystal Gorman. "Children need to be given opportunities to play in situations where there is a possibility of injury and to learn to navigate the world around them. The possibility of an injury doesn't outweigh the benefits of the experience".

To encourage families to get outside and provide children with opportunities to play freely, the Timiskaming Health Unit has partnered with Healthy Kids Community Challenge in Temiskaming Shores to promote Screen Free Week across the Timiskaming district from April 30-May 6, 2018. Screen Free Week challenges families to turn off their TVs, computers and tablets and enjoy activities like reading, games and play. To assist families to Power Off and Play, activity tracking sheets are available at various community centres in Temiskaming Shores as well as at all Timiskaming Health Unit offices. These tracking sheets can help families become more aware of the time they spend on screens and perhaps reduce it. They also give families a place to plan ways they can get active. Families are encouraged to share how they get moving on THU's on Facebook page by May 15 or watch the Healthy Kids Community Challenge Facebook for a chance to win a prize.

Families are encouraged to get outside and play. Research shows that when children are outside, they move more, sit less and play longer. Children who play actively in nature show resilience, self-regulation and develop skills for dealing with stress later in life.

The foundation for an active life is laid in childhood. By encouraging active children, we're ultimately encouraging healthy, active adults.

www.timiskaminghu.com

<http://www.temiskamingshores.ca/en/resident/HKCC.asp>

For more information

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