

Promoting physical activity during adolescence and adulthood

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AutismONTARIO

Agenda

1

Discuss the value and benefits of physical activity

2

Discuss rates of physical activity among autistic adolescents/adults

3

Discuss barriers that limit participation, especially during emerging adulthood



Agenda



TIPS AND STRATEGIES ON
HOW TO IMPLEMENT
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



ADVOCACY EFFORTS



The benefits and importance of physical activity



Photo Credit: KFL& A Public Health



The benefits and importance of physical activity

Create a routine
and a sense of
predictability

Opportunity to
socialize, be
with others, part
of a community

Sense of fun
and enjoyment

Develop and
maintain social
and motor skills,
balance

Opportunity to
re(create)



The benefits and importance of physical activity

Can help
improve sleep
quality

Maintaining a
healthier weight

Strengthen
muscles and
bones

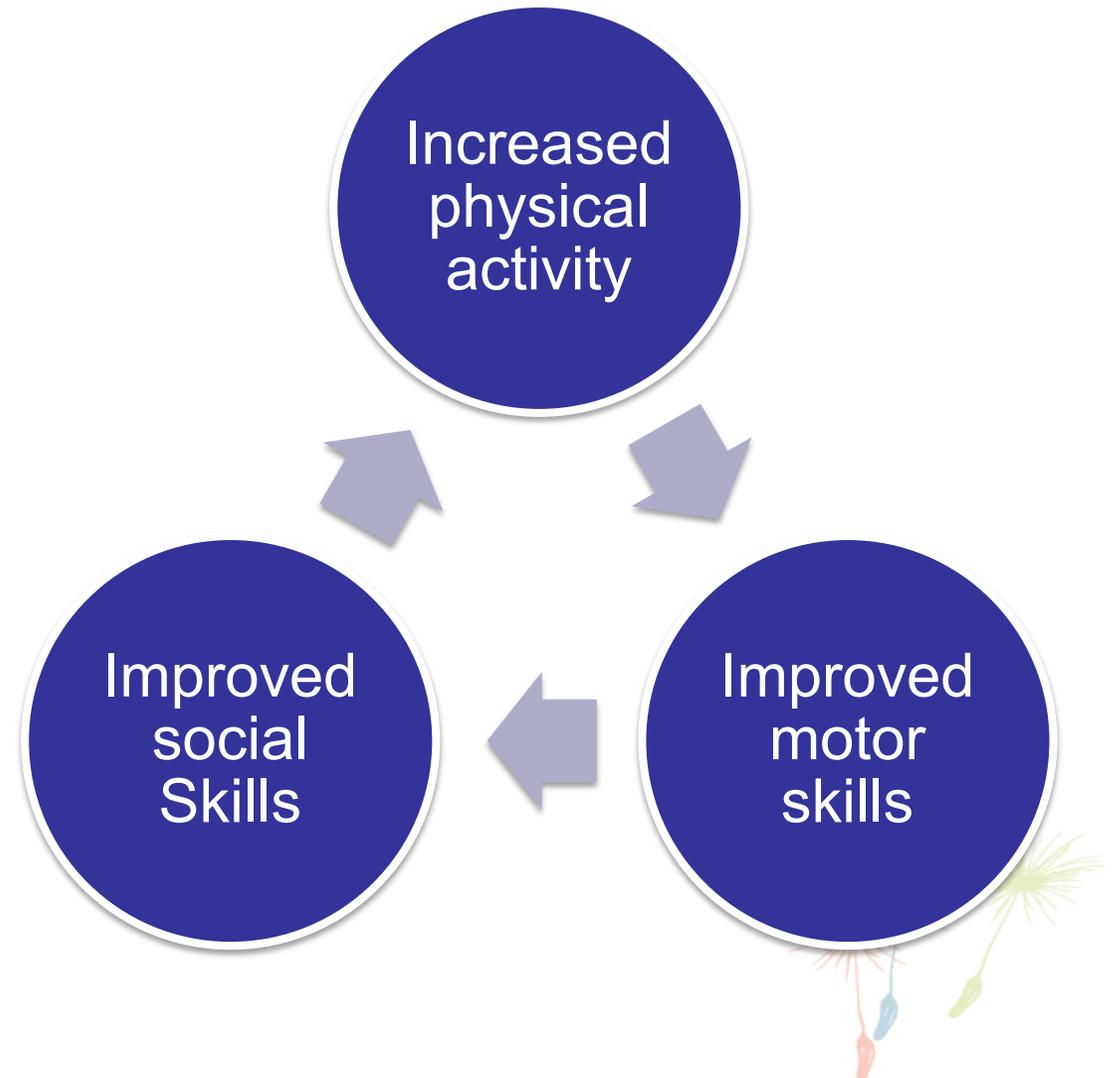
Improves
mobility and
balance

Improvement in
physical health
(Diabetes, CVD,
Joint/Back Pain)



The social and motor relationship

- A relationship between social and motor skills
- Poor motor skills are linked to poor social skills
- Poor social skills are linked to poor motor skills



Mental Health and Physical Activity

Lab settings suggest positive impacts between activity and mental health

Can help manage stress-decrease in salivary cortisol

Especially effective when combined with other mental health supports and therapies

Individuals on the spectrum are at increased risks for mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression



But there is a problem...

Despite the many benefits, autistic adolescents and adults up to 60% less likely to be physically active

74% less likely to participate in organized sport

Less likely to participate in school-based sports and activities



But there is a problem...

Largest drop off during adolescence to adulthood which is a critical period of emerging adulthood

Early research suggests inactivity during adolescence, can contribute to inactivity during adulthood



Why might they be less active?

Lack of
motivation

Fear of injury

Challenges
with movement
patterns

Exclusionary
environments

Sensory
sensitivities
(hyper/hypo)



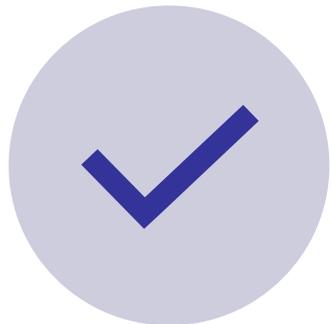
Why might they be less active?



Lack of opportunities



Poor coaching/teaching



Policy level issues



Lack of government funding and financial burden



Barriers



Lack of opportunities/resources



Multiple competing priorities moving into emerging adulthood (growing out health care system, post-secondary education, work, assisted living)



Time constraints



Personal support workers not available

Stand up and stretch



Photo Credit: Teeter

How do we support the physical activity of autistic adolescents and adults?

Do we need some guidance?



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Physical Activity Guidelines-Adolescents

Physical Activity for Disabled Children and Disabled Young People

Getting and staying active is about

- Equality
- Inclusivity
- Finding what's fun
- Exploring what activities make you feel good

Benefits of physical activity

- Meet new people
- Confidence and concentration
- Sense of achievement
- Mental health
- Calmer, less stressed
- Muscles and motor skills
- Balance and coordination

How much physical activity should I do?

- When starting build up slowly
Ask: Can you do this today?
- Do bitesize chunks of physical activity throughout the day
- For good health benefits do **20 mins** of physical activity per day
- Do challenging but manageable strength and balance activities 3 times per week
- Small amounts of physical activity are good for you as well

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines for Disabled Children and Disabled Young People 2022. This infographic was co-produced with disabled children, disabled young people, parents and carers.



Physical Activity Guidelines-Adults



How could we achieve those guidelines?

Household
chores
(cleaning,
vacuuming)

Walking/running

Gardening

Strength
training-weights

Skipping rope



How could we achieve those guidelines?



YOGA



BOXING,
TAEKWONDO



SWIMMING



RIDING A BIKE-
STATIONARY OR
MOVING



How could we achieve those guidelines?



Dance



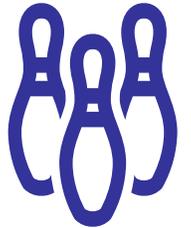
Dancing to
music



Horseback
riding



Climbing stairs



Bowling



Implementing strategies



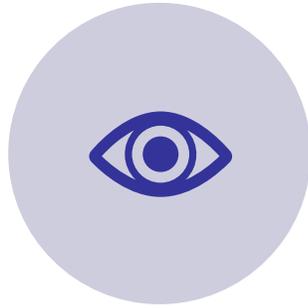
Photo Credit: Truesport.org



Evidence-Informed Strategies



DELIVERY OF
INSTRUCTIONS



SELF-MONITORING



CUEING



REINFORCEMENTS



Additional Strategies

1

Do it with a friend,
colleague, on your
own

2

Build it into a
schedule and do it
regularly at a
particular day/time

3

Do it as a family-
get everyone to be
active



Additional Strategies

Individualize-can't be too hard or too easy

Build rapport

Rule of 3-short and concise

Reward system

Front load activities



Tips and Tricks

Pick a time each day and go for a 10-15 minute walk

Each time you use the washroom do 3 squats, or push-ups, or jumping jacks

Make a schedule- set your alarm for a 15 minute workout

Set a goal.
Make it fun!

Exercise snacks-
small amounts
throughout the day



Advocacy

Coordinate pathways with health, education and social institutions

Funding for physical activity as a health priority- can be costly

Training staff, parents, coaches, self-advocates

Pathways for wholistic living



Take home messages



Some activity is better than none



Ask self, do I feel ready to be active today?



Try to be active every single day



Try in-person activities and virtual activities

