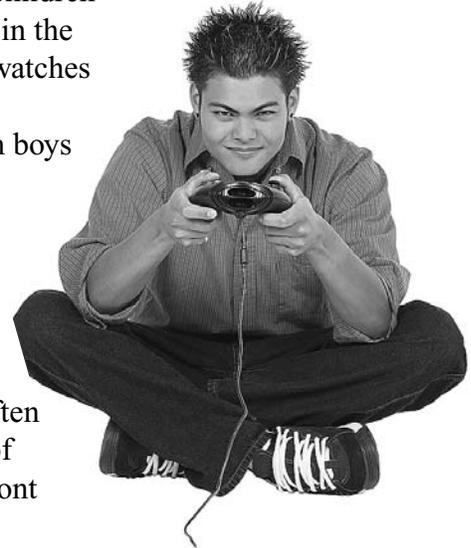


## Lesson 2: Active Living Choices

Do you know that the amount of time Canadian children spend playing video games is among the highest in the world? Do you know that the average Canadian watches almost 22 hours of TV per week? A recent study concluded that more than 50 percent of Canadian boys and 72 percent of Canadian girls are not active enough for optimal growth and development.



Children are born with a natural inclination to be active. As preschoolers, they have boundless energy and love to run, jump, and climb.

However, in our society as children grow, they often become **sedentary**. They spend more and more of their day sitting—in a car, behind a desk, or in front of a computer or television.

*sedentary:*  
inactive, not  
moving around  
much

Being active has many health benefits—not only in the physical dimension of your life. Studies have shown that regular exercise improves ratings of positive emotional and social well-being. In this lesson you will explore how fitness and exercise are health-enhancing choices. You will also discover that when carried too far exercise becomes a health risk.



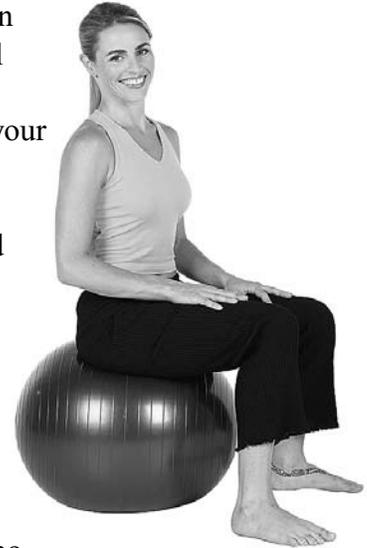
You know that physical exercise keeps your body in shape. Did you know that physical exercise also keeps your mind sharp? New studies indicate that exercise stimulates new cell growth in the brain and increases mental abilities by 20% to 30%.

Do you spend a lot of time playing video games, working at a computer, watching television, or studying? Are you a sports enthusiast who enjoys organized sports activities? Are you keen on other athletic activities such as martial arts, gymnastics, dancing, or yoga? Would you rate yourself as physically active or inactive?

## Choosing to be Active

If you have been inactive, try finding ways to be more active at home, school, or work. Following are some ways to add activity to your lifestyle:

- Make the time in front of the TV more active. Sit on a fitness ball and exercise your back and abdominal muscles. Stand up during ads and do some simple stretches. Or walk on a treadmill while you watch your favourite show.
- Walk or cycle to your friends' houses, the mall, and school.
- Get off the bus before your destination and walk the last couple of blocks.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Put on some music and dance around. Dance as if no one is watching.
- Use a basket instead of a cart to carry your groceries if buying just a few things.
- Get a part-time job that requires some physical activity. For example, you can deliver newspapers, mow lawns, shovel snow, or walk dogs.
- Select physical education as one of your course options at school.
- Join a sports team or take part in an intramural activity.
- Get involved in a leisure activity such as bowling, swimming, hiking, dancing, curling, or golfing.





- **Aerobic activities.** Aerobic activities, also called *endurance activities*, are those that increase your heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time. Examples include walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, dancing, playing tennis, climbing stairs, and mowing lawns. These activities help your respiratory and circulatory systems stay healthy. They also give you more energy.
- **Flexibility activities.** Flexibility activities are those that make you reach, bend, and stretch all your muscle groups. Examples include golfing, bowling, curling, yoga, T'ai Chi, raking leaves, and vacuuming. These activities help you to move more easily. They keep your muscles relaxed and your joints mobile.
- **Strength training activities.** Strength training activities are those that make you work your muscles against some kind of resistance. Examples include lifting and carrying groceries, climbing stairs, and wearing a backpack while hiking. Exercises like abdominal curls and push-ups are other examples. Strength training activities help your muscles and bones stay strong, improve your posture, and help prevent diseases like osteoporosis.



1. With a partner or small group discuss the types of physical activity each of you currently does. Brainstorm ways you can become more physically active.
2. Which of the physical activities that you listed are endurance activities? Which are flexibility activities? Which are strength activities?
3. Which of the activities that you listed will be easiest to include as part of your daily routine? Which ones will be most enjoyable to you?
4. Many organizations, facilities, and health professionals in your community focus on fitness and exercise. Identify some of the sources of information and health support that are available to you within your local community.

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

The amount of time you spend on physical activity depends on the intensity level of the activity. Canada's *Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Living* makes the following recommendations:

- For light effort activities, spend 60 minutes per day
- For moderate effort activities, spend 30 to 60 minutes per day.
- For vigorous effort activities, spend 20 to 30 minutes per day.

You can gauge the intensity level by paying attention to how warm you feel and the rate and depth of your breathing.

- When you are engaged in light effort activities, you begin to feel warm and your breathing rate and depth increases slightly.
- When you are engaged in moderate effort activities, you feel warmer and your breathing rate and depth increases significantly.
- When you are engaged in vigorous effort activities, you feel very warm, and you are more out of breath but you can still talk.

## When Exercise Becomes Too Much of a Good Thing

Most active individuals exercise regularly because of the health and fitness benefits or the pleasure exercise gives. However, some take exercise too far. They force themselves to exercise, even if they don't feel well. They are upset if they miss a workout. They put workouts ahead of friends, homework, and other responsibilities.



*compulsive exercise disorder: a disorder in which an individual feels compelled to exercise, and struggles with guilt and anxiety if he or she does not work out*

Experts say that repeatedly exercising beyond the requirements for good health may be signs of **compulsive exercise disorder**. These individuals often define their self-worth through their athletic performance. People with compulsive exercise disorder frequently also have an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa. These individuals often have distorted body images: they see themselves as too fat. They base the amount they exercise on how much they eat. They worry that they'll gain weight if they skip exercising for a day. They may eat a very restrictive diet in addition to their compulsive exercise. People with bulimia nervosa may use exercise (in addition to purging) as a way to compensate for their binge eating.

**muscle dysmorphia:** a disorder in which an individual becomes obsessed that he or she is not muscular enough

**anabolic steroids:** human-made substances that increase muscle mass and muscle strength but have unhealthy, even dangerous, side effects

Some people who exercise excessively have a disorder called **muscle dysmorphia**. They have distorted body images: they see themselves as too thin or underdeveloped. Weight lifting and bodybuilding become the focus of their lives. In addition, they may eat a high protein diet and take potentially dangerous dietary supplements.

Some bodybuilders use **anabolic steroids** (commonly called *steroids*, *roids*, *juice*, *gym candy*, *pumpers*, or *stackers*) to increase their muscle development. Abusing steroids can have many undesirable consequences and risks. For example, users may experience hair loss and complexion problems. Steroids can cause hormone imbalances; as a result, males may develop breasts, and females may grow facial hair. Steroids can cause liver tumours and heart problems. Steroids may also affect the emotions of users and make them aggressive, angry, or even violent.



5. The media today is filled with images of the ideal body—thin and willowy for women; strong and muscular for men. How might these images contribute to compulsive exercise disorder?
6. What are some of the symptoms of compulsive exercise disorder?
7. If you suspect one of your friends has this disorder, what can you do to help?
- 8 Steroids have very serious psychological and physical side effects. In recent years more and more teenagers are taking these dangerous drugs to build leaner bodies. In a recent study, about 83 000 young Canadians—mostly young men between 11 and 18 years of age—reported using steroids at least once.

With a partner or small group, discuss why so many young people consume these potentially dangerous products.

**Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.**

For tips on maintaining your physical health, view Segment 8: Health Maintenance on your Student Support CD.

Go to page 6 of Assignment Booklet 1B and respond to question 3 of Section 2.



## Looking Back; Looking Ahead

In this lesson you have been reflecting on active living. You explored how fitness and exercise are health-enhancing choices. You also discovered that when carried too far exercise becomes a health risk. You learned about the dangers of abusing anabolic steroids. In the next lesson you will explore stress—both negative and positive—and ways to manage stress.

### Glossary

**anabolic steroids:** human-made substances that increase muscle mass and muscle strength but have unhealthy, even dangerous, side effects

**muscle dysmorphia:** a disorder in which an individual becomes obsessed that he or she is not muscular enough

**compulsive exercise disorder:** a disorder in which an individual feels compelled to exercise and struggles with guilt and anxiety if he or she does not work out

**sedentary:** inactive, not moving around much

### Suggested Responses

- Answers will vary with respect to the physical activities you currently do and how you can increase your activity level. You may be active in sports or games such as rollerblading, golfing, or weight lifting. You may mow the lawn or clean your room. You might increase your level of physical activity by joining a sports team, taking stairs instead of escalators or elevators, walking or biking instead of driving, or exercising with a friend. You can become more physically active by using a push mower instead of a ride-on mower, washing the car by hand instead of using the car wash, or raking leaves instead of using a leaf blower.
- Answers will vary depending on the activities you listed in question 1. Some activities may fall in more than one category.
  - **endurance activities:** rollerblading and mowing the lawn
  - **flexibility activities:** golfing, cleaning your room, and raking leaves
  - **strength activities:** weightlifting and climbing stairs
- Answers will depend on your individual schedule and your particular likes and dislikes. It may be easier for you to exercise in the morning than in the afternoon or vice-versa. You might like to visit a gym or you might prefer to incorporate exercise into your regular routine—such as walking or gardening.

4. You may have identified organizations such as Alberta Health and Wellness, your regional health authority, the Heart and Stroke foundation, the Canadian Diabetes foundation, universities, schools, gyms, or some food stores.
5. Media images of people with bodies that are supposedly ideal may give viewers unrealistic expectations of what they should look like, and such images may contribute to compulsive exercise disorder. Viewers do not always appreciate that only a very few people naturally have bodies like those shown in the media. In fact, many of the media images have been enhanced digitally, so even the models themselves don't look this way.
6. People with compulsive exercise disorder often exercise several hours every day. They feel guilty and anxious when they do not exercise. They may feel compelled to exercise after eating.
7. If you suspect that one of your friends has compulsive exercise disorder, you might rely on the CLUES method:
  - Connect with the person.
  - Listen to him or her.
  - Understand what the person is going through.
  - Express concern.
  - Seek help from a responsible adult, agency, crisis centre, or hotline.
8. Following are some reasons that teens—especially males—may use steroids:
  - to make a sports team
  - to compete with others who are using steroids
  - to become more popular and attractive
  - because of peer pressure
  - because of poor self-image

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