

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

Proposed publication date: April 16, 2018

Content provided by: Alberta Health Services – contributed by Apple Magazine

Alberta Health Services (AHS) knows that wellness matters, and this year AHS has been asking our people and Albertans, ‘What’s your balance?’ Throughout the year of wellness and finding balance, AHS is highlighting four areas of wellness including, healthy eating, mental wellness, physical activity and sleep & fatigue.

Over the next couple months, AHS is bringing Mental Wellness to the forefront, and this April the theme is ‘Take care of you’.

Sports and self-esteem

Youth learn the confidence to move

When kids play sports—whether in an organized lacrosse league or just kicking a ball around the park with friends—they benefit beyond building a stronger body. They’re building stronger mental health as well.

Participating in sports has strong positive effects on self-esteem, concluded researchers at Carleton University who studied about 400 boys and girls in Grades 5 to 8.

“People participate in sports for different reasons, but ultimately it’s all around making kids better, healthier people,” says Lea Norris of Sport for Life, a non-profit that aims to improve the health of Canadians. “The self-confidence, mental health, ability to socialize—that sense of social belonging is huge—as well as leadership and resiliency—all those pieces fall into place when kids play sports.”

Kids can pick from a wide range of sports—everything from fencing to rock climbing—but not every activity can fit their family. Finances, transportation and schedules can all be a barrier to children developing their physical skills.

“If you don’t have that foundation of movement skills you may be less likely to have that confidence to move,” Norris says. Just riding a bike or playing catch with family in the early



elementary years can help your kids develop the motor skills—and feelings of competence—to help them play when they're older.

Developing those early movement skills is especially important for girls because they're more likely to quit a sport. "When girls start to drop out at 12, 13 or 14, it's really hard to get them back," says Norris. "You can offer every type of activity possible in high school, but those girls have left. We want them to stay in long enough to get the benefits of sports."

You don't have to enroll your young girls and boys in tennis lessons or suit them up with expensive hockey equipment. "Get them out in a nonthreatening environment with their friends or the family to try something new," says Norris. Throw a Frisbee or a football around. Try playing tag or going for regular family bike rides.

"The important thing," she says, "is to move."

Read the full article in Apple magazine's fall 2016 issue on applemag.ca.

To find out more about 'What's your balance?' visit ahs.ca/whatsyourbalance. You can also join the conversation on social media by using the hashtag #AHSwhatsyourbalance