

## WHY IS ACTIVE SCHOOL TRAVEL IMPORTANT

Children and youth in Simcoe Muskoka are not getting enough physical activity to be healthy. One of the easiest ways for children and youth get at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity is to walk or wheel more often to the places they need to go--like school. Fewer children and youth are using active ways to get to and from school, and more are being driven than ever before, contributing to harmful greenhouse gases and air pollution which can negatively impact both the environment, the air we breathe and human health.

- Less than 1 in 5 children and youth in Canada meet the [24 Hour Movement Guidelines](#) for physical activity, sedentary (sitting/screen time) and sleep behaviours.
- 21% of 5-19 year olds use active modes of transportation (e.g. walk, bike)
- 63% use inactive modes of transportation (e.g. cars, bus); and
- 16% use a combination of active and inactive modes of transportation to travel to and from school.

Source: [2020 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth](#) using CANPLAY data.

Walking and wheeling to school helps students to reduce time spent sitting and to feel refreshed and ready to learn. Studies show the benefits of physical activity are more than having a healthy heart and body. Physical activity also supports brain development, which can lead to improved learning and attention at school. Physical activity can also improve children and youth's mental and social well-being--like feeling good about themselves and what they can achieve, and have more positive relationships with others. Plus, active kids have more fun and feel happier.

### **Active school travel brings many other benefits to children, youth, and families as well as the school environment and the overall community:**

- Walking and wheeling gives kids the chance to get to know their neighbourhood and develop confidence and independence.
- Walking and wheeling creates opportunities to learn valuable pedestrian and cycling skills and safety.
- More students and families walking or wheeling to school makes everyone easier to see and puts more eyes on the street for safety.
- Fewer cars around schools reduces traffic congestion, improves safety and decreases harmful air pollution.
- Active school travel is an easy and fun way for families to reduce their carbon footprint, fight against climate change and support a healthy environment.
- Making time for kids to walk and wheel to and from school is a healthy habit that can last a lifetime.
- Parents/caregivers can role model healthy behaviours and benefit from the physical activity too.
- School zones and other community environments that support walking and wheeling are more inviting and accessible to people with different needs.

For more information on the benefits of active school travel, visit [Ontario Active School Travel - Benefits.](#)