



QUICK FACTS FOR PARENTS

Learning about **Active Transportation, including Cycling**

Active Transportation:
Any type of human-powered transportation – walking, cycling, skateboarding, wheeling a wheelchair, and so on – used to get oneself or others from one place to another.



Active transportation can be an important part of a healthy, active lifestyle, which provides a solid foundation for lifelong well-being. It is a healthy alternative to motorized transportation.

Research has shown that increased levels of physical activity lead to better academic achievement, better concentration, better classroom behaviour, and more focused learning. Other benefits include improvements in social and emotional behaviour, physical capacity, self-concept, and the ability to manage stress.

In addition, active transportation has environmental benefits. It reduces the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

WHAT DO STUDENTS LEARN AT SCHOOL ABOUT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION?

The Health and Physical Education curriculum helps children and youth develop an awareness of the benefits of active transportation and the skills they need to travel safely. Students learn:

- safe practices when walking and biking and to wear appropriate protective gear, such as properly fitting helmets, when doing activities like riding, skateboarding, or snowboarding
- to make safe decisions, including decisions about travel routes and routines
- to understand how cycling, walking, wheeling, and other active transportation activities can develop fitness, balance, and skills for moving with confidence
- to understand the health and environmental benefits of participating in and enjoying active transportation

Cycling, walking, wheeling, and other active transportation modes are included as examples in the curriculum to show how students can enjoy being physically active while staying safe.

Students can also learn about active transportation, especially cycling, in other subjects, such as science and technology, and geography. In Grade 4, for example, students learn how the gear system on a bicycle works. In Grade 9 and later grades, students may study sustainable transportation systems and investigate the impacts of cycling and cycling lanes.

For health benefits, children (aged 5-11 years) and youth (aged 12-17 years) should minimize the time they spend being sedentary each day. This may be achieved by limiting sedentary (motorized) transport, extended sitting, and time spent indoors throughout the day.

Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines, 2012

In 2014, Ontario introduced #cycleON, a twenty-year vision for cycling in the province. It is designed to encourage the growth of cycling and improve the safety of cyclists across the province.

#CycleON: Ontario's Cycling Strategy

What do younger students learn?

Students in Grades 1–3 begin to learn about cycling, walking, wheeling, and rolling as ways to be physically active. Safety practices, such as planning routines for getting to and from school, considering safety when travelling, and wearing a properly fitting helmet, are included. In Grades 4–6, students develop their ability to assess risk and make safe decisions, while also practising ways of keeping themselves and others safe.

What do older students learn?

Students continue to learn about safety in Grades 7 and 8, with cycling, walking, and wheeling providing important examples of how to be physically active and safe while going to or from school or using recreational trails. In Grades 9–12, cycling and other forms of active transportation are frequently used as examples of ways to build personal fitness and to continue participating in physical activities throughout their lives.

SUPPORTING ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Parents and schools can work together to keep kids active and safe. Parents can support active transportation by:

- providing opportunities for walking, cycling, wheeling, and rolling
- ensuring that their children follow safe practices, such as wearing properly fitting helmets certified by a recognized safety standards association, when cycling or participating in activities like skateboarding or tobogganing
- acting as role models and always following safe practices themselves
- finding safe cycling/walking/wheeling/rolling routes for going to school, work, or volunteer jobs and for family recreation
- getting together with other parents to organize a walking school bus
- checking with the school or public health department about resources or programs to support active transportation

MORE INFORMATION

- » Active & Safe Routes to School is a community-based initiative that promotes the use of active transportation for the daily trip to school, addressing health, physical activity, and traffic safety issues while taking action on air pollution and climate change. <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca>.
- » For rules of the road, helmet information, and safety tips for cyclists of all ages, go to: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/pdfs/cycling-skills.pdf>
- » For a “kid-friendly” guide to safe cycling, with riding tips and information on bicycle equipment and the rules of the road, go to: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/pdfs/young-cyclist-guide.pdf>
- » Ophea, (formerly Ontario Physical and Health Education Association) provides a number of safety-related resources. These can be found at www.safety.ophea.net. For information about pedestrian, bicycle, inline skating, and skateboarding safety, as well as other transportation-related safety tips, see Ophea’s *Ontario Road Safety Resource* at <http://www.ontarioroadsafety.ca>
- » For more information about Ontario’s #cycleON strategy, go to <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/publications/ontario-cycling-strategy.shtml>

Since 1985, the proportion of Canadian children regularly walking to school has fallen by 50% to just 1 in 3.

Saving Money and Time with Active School Travel, March 2010, Green Communities Canada

Distances of up to 5 kilometres are travelled more quickly, door-to-door, by bicycle than by car.

Air Pollution and Active Transportation, 2002, Health Canada
