

Early Specialization in Sport

Enrolling your child in sport is one of the best gifts you can give to them. The benefits of being active and participating on a team, or as an individual, are widespread. From increased positive mental and physical health, to greater social skills, children can gain a lot from participating in sport. However, even with so many benefits, there can be too much of a good thing. If a child spends too much time and energy in one sport, isolating them from friends and other opportunities, it can decrease their social and psychological growth.

In regards to physical health, specializing in one sport too early can limit the range of skills a child possesses as well as their overall motor skill development. This lack of skills and, often, a lack of confidence, can potentially affect lifelong involvement in physical activity by discouraging the child from participating in other activities. Lastly, early specialization in sport can actually change the way your child's body grows and develops due to increased stress on the body and repetitive injuries.

If you do choose to specialize your child early, pay attention to signs of burnout and isolation and talk to the coach about opportunities for cross training. Remember that having fun is an important factor to being active for life!

For more information visit: <http://canadiansportforlife.ca/parents>



We get kids up on their feet!

The Alberta Medical Association and Ever Active Schools have brought a free, award-winning program for school-aged children to Alberta schools. They can provide your school with resources and support – from scratch or to enrich an existing run club. For more information visit: <http://www.amayouthrunclub.com/>.

Play Safe

School and community playgrounds are great places for your child to play, challenge themselves and spend time with friends. On school grounds, your child usually has staff supervision and support. In order to help your child learn to play safe, you can supervise your child in community playgrounds and model and teach them safe behaviours such as:

- Waiting their turn. If someone is using equipment that your child would like to use, stress that they must wait their turn or try another area.
- Avoiding or being careful around hazards such as wet, icy, or snowy surfaces and obstacles in their path such as other kids or moving swings.
- Wearing appropriate shoes and clothing for the weather and for outdoor play. Loose items like scarves should stay tucked inside their jackets in the winter.
- Playing on equipment that is the right size for them. Playgrounds are built for different ages and stages of growth. As your child grows, they can try larger playground equipment.

Teaching your child to follow these simple rules will help them play safe and avoid injury on school and community playgrounds all year long.