

Don't be fooled. Guideline don't drive behavior

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The bar has been lowered for Canadians regarding the nation's physical-activity standards. In short, there is compelling evidence that doing less is still associated with significant health benefit.

Two main changes are worth noting in the new Canadian physical-activity guidelines.

First, the classification system used to differentiate the recommended level of physical activity across the life span has been revised.

The previous age range for children and youth, 6-14 year olds, is being expanded to include all school-age children, 5-11 years old, and youth, 12-17 years old. The age range of adults, previously 20-54 years old, will encompass a larger range of individuals and include people 18-64 years of age. Coincidentally, older adults will now focus on people 65 years of age and older compared to the previous guidelines that focused on people 55 years of age and older.

The second change deals with the recommended volume of moderate-to-vigorous activity.

For children and youth, the recommended 90 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity of physical activity per day will be decreased to 60 minutes. For both adults and [older adults](#), the recommendation of achieving 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on most days of the week is now lowered to achieving 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week.

A new addition to the guideline changes involves developing recommendations on the maximum amount of time an individual should spend in sedentary behaviours, such as [watching television](#) and sitting in front of a computer. This is an important move as setting guidelines for sedentary behaviour is potentially just as important as

establishing guidelines for physical activity behaviour.

A positive consequence of these changes is that Canadian physical activity standards are now in line with those set by the World Health Organization and other developed nations like the United States, Britain and Australia, improving research correspondence and the ability to compare physical activity levels across the globe.

It also has been suggested by some experts that lowering the physical activity guidelines may have desirable spill over effects (i.e., encourage rather than discourage inactive Canadians). Although this logic may apply to a small number of Canadians, the majority of inactive individuals are likely disinterested in physical activity irrespective of the level of standards set.

This raises a fundamental question, "How do we get inactive members of our society to pay attention to [physical activity guidelines](#) that are known to have health benefits?"

There is no easy answer to this question and it remains one of the most challenging and pressing public health issues. We need to work together at the individual, environment and policy level to get inactive Canadians moving.

Let's not fool ourselves, guidelines do not drive behaviour, behaviour drives [guidelines](#).

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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