

Lesson 4: Addressing Barriers to Physical Activity

Introduction

Given the health benefits of regular physical activity, we might ask why two-thirds of Canadians are not active at recommended levels. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, “Two-thirds of Canadians are inactive, a serious threat to their health and a burden on the public health care system” (*Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living, “What Is It?”*). This reality clearly points to the need to help Canadians become more physically active. There are barriers that keep Canadians from being, or becoming, physically active regularly. Understanding common barriers to physical activity and creating strategies to overcome them may help make physical activity part of daily life.

In this lesson students examine the common barriers to physical activity and determine which barriers are holding them back from being physically active. Students also determine ways to overcome those barriers.

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following websites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity.” *Physical Activity for Everyone*. 22 May 2007.

<www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/overcome.htm>.

Public Health Agency of Canada. *Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for Youth*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002. Available online at <www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/downloads.html>.

---. *Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004. Available online at <www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/downloads.html>.

---. “What Is It?” *Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*. 15 Dec. 2003. <www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/intro.html>.



Specific Learning Outcomes

11.FM.2 Examine factors that have an impact on the development and implementation of and adherence to a personal physical activity plan.

Examples: motivation, barriers, changing lifestyle, values and attitudes, social benefits, finances, medical conditions, incentives, readiness for change

11.FM.3 Examine and evaluate factors that affect fitness and activity choices.

Examples: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, personal interests, personal health, family history, environment, finances, culture, level of risk



Key Understandings

- People encounter many personal and environmental barriers to physical activity.
 - It is necessary to develop self-understanding of own barriers to physical activity.
 - There are ways to overcome common barriers to physical activity.
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Essential Questions

1. What are the differences between personal and environmental barriers?
 2. What strategies worked best in overcoming your own barriers to becoming more physically active?
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Background Information

Barriers to Physical Activity*

People experience a variety of personal and environmental barriers to engaging in regular physical activity.

- **Personal barriers:** With technological advances and conveniences, people's lives have in many ways become increasingly easier, as well as less active. In addition, people have many personal reasons or explanations for being inactive. Some common explanations (barriers) that people cite for resistance to exercise are (Sallis and Hovell; Sallis, Hovell, and Hofstetter)
 - insufficient time to exercise
 - inconvenience of exercise
 - lack of self-motivation
 - non-enjoyment of exercise
 - boredom with exercise
 - lack of confidence in their ability to be physically active (low self-efficacy)
 - fear of being injured or having been injured recently
 - lack of self-management skills, such as the ability to set personal goals, monitor progress, or reward progress toward such goals
 - lack of encouragement, support, or companionship from family and friends
 - non-availability of parks, sidewalks, bicycle trails, or safe and pleasant walking paths close to home or the workplace

* Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity." *Physical Activity for Everyone*. 22 May 2007. <www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/overcome.htm>. Adapted with permission.

The top three barriers to engaging in physical activity across the adult lifespan are

- time
- energy
- motivation

Other barriers include

- cost
 - facilities
 - illness or injury
 - transportation
 - partner issues
 - skill
 - safety considerations
 - child care
 - uneasiness with change
 - unsuitable programs
- **Environmental barriers:** The environment in which we live has a great influence on our level of physical activity. Many factors in our environment affect us. Obvious factors include the accessibility of walking paths, cycling trails, and recreation facilities. Factors such as traffic, availability of public transportation, crime, and pollution may also have an effect. Other environmental factors include our social environment, such as support from family and friends, and community spirit.

It is possible to make changes in our environment through campaigns to support active transportation, legislation for safer communities, and the creation of new recreation facilities.

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity." *Physical Activity for Everyone*. 22 May 2007.
<www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/overcome.htm>.

Sallis, J. F., and M. F. Hovell. "Determinants of Exercise Behavior." *Exercise and Sport Science Reviews* 18 (1990): 307–30.

Sallis, J. F., M. F. Hovell, and C. R. Hofstetter. "Predictors of Adoption and Maintenance of Vigorous Physical Activity in Men and Women." *Preventive Medicine* 21.2 (1992):



Refer to RM 5-FM: Barriers to Being Active Quiz (available in Word and Excel formats).

Suggestions for Overcoming Physical Activity Barriers*	
Barriers	Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers
Lack of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the available time slots or create time slots during which you are willing to give up a sedentary activity (e.g., watching television). Monitor your daily activities for one week. Identify at least three 30-minute time slots you could use for physical activity. ▪ Add physical activity to your daily routine (e.g., walk or ride your bike to school or work or shopping, organize school activities around physical activity, walk the dog, exercise while you watch TV, park farther away from your destination). ▪ Make time for physical activity (e.g., walk, jog, or swim during your lunch hour, take fitness breaks while you study, walk up and down stairs between classes). ▪ Select activities requiring minimal time, such as walking, jogging, or stair climbing.
Social influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain your interest in physical activity to friends and family. Ask them to support your efforts. ▪ Invite friends and family members to exercise with you. Plan social activities involving exercise. ▪ Develop new friendships with physically active people. Join a group (e.g., hiking or cycling club).
Lack of energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic. ▪ Convince yourself that if you give it a chance, physical activity will increase your energy level; then, try it.
Lack of motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan ahead and make the commitment. Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule and write it on your calendar. ▪ Invite a friend to exercise with you on a regular basis and write it on both your calendars. ▪ Join an exercise group or class.
Fear of injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn how to warm up and cool down to prevent injury. ▪ Learn how to exercise appropriately, considering your age, fitness level, skill level, and health status. ▪ Choose activities involving minimum risk.
Lack of skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Select activities requiring no new skills, such as walking, climbing stairs, or jogging. ▪ Exercise with friends who are at the same skill level as you are. ▪ Find a friend who is willing to teach you some new skills. ▪ Take a class to develop new skills.
Lack of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Select activities that require minimal facilities or equipment, such as walking, jogging, jumping rope, or calisthenics. ▪ Identify inexpensive, convenient resources available in your community (e.g., community education programs, park and recreation programs, worksite programs).
Weather conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a set of regular activities that are always available regardless of weather (e.g., indoor cycling, aerobic dance, indoor swimming, calisthenics, stair climbing, rope skipping, mall walking, dancing, gymnasium games). ▪ Look on outdoor activities that depend on weather conditions (e.g., cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, skating, outdoor swimming, outdoor tennis) as “bonuses”—extra activities possible when weather and circumstances permit.
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Put a jump rope in your suitcase and jump rope. ▪ Walk the halls and climb the stairs in hotels. ▪ Stay in places with swimming pools or exercise facilities. ▪ Join the YMCA or YWCA (ask about reciprocal membership agreement). ▪ During gas station stops, take exercise breaks. ▪ Bring your favourite music that motivates you.
Family involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exercise with your brother or sister when babysitting (e.g., go for a walk together, play tag or other running games, get an aerobic dance DVD for kids and exercise together). You can spend time together and still get your exercise. ▪ Find ways to be active around your home with others (e.g., shoot hoops on the driveway, play tennis at a nearby tennis court, go for a bicycle ride with a friend, play with siblings, do household chores such as mowing the lawn).

* Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity.” *Physical Activity for Everyone*. 22 May 2007. <www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/overcome.htm>. Adapted with permission.

RM 5–FM: Barriers to Being Active Quiz* ***What Keeps You from Being More Active?***

Listed below are reasons that people give to describe why they do not get as much physical activity as they think they should. Please read each statement and indicate how likely you are to say each of the following statements. (Circle the applicable number for each statement.)

How likely are you to say?	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
1. My day is so busy now, I just don't think I can make the time to include physical activity in my regular schedule.	3	2	1	0
2. None of my family members or friends likes to do anything active, so I don't have a chance to exercise.	3	2	1	0
3. I'm just too tired after school or work to get any exercise.	3	2	1	0
4. I've been thinking about getting more exercise, but I just can't seem to get started.	3	2	1	0
5. Exercise can be risky.	3	2	1	0
6. I don't get enough exercise because I have never learned the skills for any sport.	3	2	1	0
7. I don't have access to jogging trails, swimming pools, bike paths, etc.	3	2	1	0
8. Physical activity takes too much time away from other commitments—time, work, family, etc.	3	2	1	0
9. I'm embarrassed about how I will look when I exercise with others.	3	2	1	0
10. I don't get enough sleep as it is. I just couldn't get up early or stay up late to get some exercise.	3	2	1	0
11. It's easier for me to find excuses not to exercise than to go out to do something.	3	2	1	0
12. I know of too many people who have hurt themselves by overdoing it with exercise.	3	2	1	0
13. I really can't see learning a new sport.	3	2	1	0
14. It's just too expensive. You have to take a class or join a club or buy the right equipment.	3	2	1	0
15. My free times during the day are too short to include exercise.	3	2	1	0
16. My usual social activities with family or friends do not include physical activity.	3	2	1	0
17. I'm too tired during the week and I need the weekend to catch up on my rest.	3	2	1	0

Continued

* Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Barriers to Physical Activity Quiz." *Physical Activity for Everyone: Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity*. <www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/barriers_quiz.pdf>. Adapted with permission.

RM 5–FM: Barriers to Being Active Quiz (Continued)

How likely are you to say?	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
18. I want to get more exercise, but I just can't seem to make myself stick to anything.	3	2	1	0
19. I'm afraid I might injure myself.	3	2	1	0
20. I'm not good enough at any physical activity to make it fun.	3	2	1	0
21. If we had exercise facilities and showers at school or at work, then I would be more likely to exercise.	3	2	1	0

Scoring

Follow these instructions to score yourself:

- In the spaces provided below, enter the number you circled for the applicable questions (on the quiz), recording the circled number for statement 1 on line 1, statement 2 on line 2, and so on.
- Add the three scores on each line. Your barriers to physical activity fall into one or more of seven categories: lack of time, social influences, lack of energy, lack of willpower, fear of injury, lack of skill, and lack of resources. A score of 5 or above in any category shows that this is an important barrier for you to overcome.

_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
1		8		15		Lack of time
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
2		9		16		Social influence
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
3		10		17		Lack of energy
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
4		11		18		Lack of willpower
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
5		12		19		Fear of injury
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
6		13		20		Lack of skill
_____	+	_____	+	_____	=	_____
7		14		21		Lack of resources

