

Live it Up... J'vis ma vie...

High School Newsletter Insert # 2

Are Ottawa youth active enough?

The School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System sheds some light

Recent media reports and public education campaigns are increasing our awareness of rising rates of obesity in Canadian children and youth. But how do Ottawa children and youth measure up to the national levels of childhood and youth obesity? In addressing this question, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is fortunate to now have local data on physical activity levels among children and youth. In December 2005, OPH and the Population Health Research Group at the University of Waterloo partnered to conduct the School Health Action Planning and Evaluation System survey, also known as SHAPES. The survey was completed by over 12,000 Ottawa youth, from 19 local high schools.

Results show:

- 63 per cent of males and 45 per cent of females are “active,” meaning they use at least 8.0 kilocalories per kilogram per day of energy, or KKD (experts recommend youth expend a minimum of 6.0 KKD for optimal growth and development).
- Students are more active in grade nine than in grade twelve.
- Only 18 per cent of students surveyed use active modes of transportation – such as walking or cycling – to get to and from school each day.
- 88 per cent of students surveyed spend at least one hour per day watching TV/movies, surfing the Internet, playing video/computer games, talking on the phone and/or instant messaging, while 31 per cent of students spent more than 3 hours per day on these activities.
- Active youth tend to have active parents, reminding us that parents continue to be one of the most important influences in the lives of their children.

These results present a call to action on an important issue. Youth need our help to become healthy and active. Ottawa Public Health, in partnership with all four Ottawa school boards, has developed an innovative youth-led, youth-driven physical activity initiative, *Live it Up...J'vis ma vie...* in which high school students, youth facilitators, school staff and Ottawa Public Health staff enhance and support school environments that promote non-competitive opportunities for an active lifestyle.

For more information on the SHAPES survey or the *Live it Up...J'vis ma vie...* project, please contact Ottawa Public Health Information at 613-580-6744 or visit ottawa.ca/health.