



# School Pedometer Toolkit

Helpful information and tools to help teachers  
use pedometers in the school environment



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**Public Health**

***“Whether at home, in childcare, at school, or in the community, we all have a role in getting kids active.”***

*Best Start Resource Centre*

# School Pedometer Toolkit

## Introduction

According to the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth, children aged 5 to 17 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and several hours of light physical activity per day. Walking is a great way to help meet these recommendations.



Pedometers are a low-cost and easy-to-use device that count the number of steps you take. By providing immediate feedback regarding the number of steps taken, they can motivate and remind students to be more active. In combination with record keeping (i.e., log sheets), pedometers can be an effective way to promote physical activity among children and youth.

## How to Properly Use a Pedometer

1. Attach the pedometer to the waistband in line with the middle of the leg (i.e., knee).
2. Return the step counter to zero - press and hold the button until a “0” is displayed on the screen and close the pedometer. It must be closed to register steps.

To test the pedometer for accuracy, count a given number of steps taken (i.e., 20) and compare that number to that displayed on the pedometer. Re-position as necessary.

A pedometer is not waterproof. Please treat it with care and avoid dropping or crushing the pedometer. The digital display will fade when it is time to change the battery.

## Target Number of Daily Steps for Children and Youth

Pedometers have been found to be an appropriate way to measure walking activity in children over 5 years.<sup>1</sup> Although 10,000 daily steps is a common health-appropriate target for adults, research suggests that children and youth need more. A daily target of 12,000 steps for children aged 6 to 19 years has been suggested by Canadian researchers to get the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day.<sup>2</sup> If children are not yet meeting the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines, it is recommended that they progressively build towards them.<sup>3</sup> A health care professional should be consulted for those with a disability or medical condition.

To ensure students are engaging in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity while walking, they need to sweat a little and breathe a little faster.

## Limitations

Pedometers do not measure how often (frequency), how hard (intensity) or how long (duration) that one has been active. For example, a pedometer cannot distinguish between walking and running. Also, a pedometer cannot measure upper-body exercises, bicycling or water sports.

Pedometer accuracy is affected by how it is worn by the user and therefore care must be taken to ensure is placed correctly.



## Ideas for Pedometer Use in the School Environment

- Challenge students to “Walk across Canada” (resource available at: [www.hpepublichealth.ca](http://www.hpepublichealth.ca)).
- Maintain and post a classroom log. Stimulate healthy competition between classes or grade levels.
- Encourage students to set and challenge both personal and group step goals.
- Add cross-curricular connections. For instance, incorporate pedometer use in math class to measure distances and compare estimated versus actual steps.
- Create opportunities to be more active during the school day. For instance offer a walking club; take your class for a mini-walk between subjects; go for an end-of-day walk to discuss the day’s key learning points; or host a walk-a-thon as a fundraising activity.

**Looking for more information?  
Visit [www.hpepublichealth.ca](http://www.hpepublichealth.ca)**





## References:

<sup>1</sup>Clemes, S. A. & Biddle, S.J. (2013). The Use of Pedometers for Monitoring Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents: Measurement Considerations

<sup>2</sup>Colley, R.C., Janssen, I., & Tremblay, M.S. (2011, November). Daily Step Target to Measure Adherence to Physical Activity Guidelines in Children. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 977-982. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0b013e31823f23b1

<sup>3</sup>Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (2016). Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth. Retrieved from: <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/thought-leadership/benefits-and-guidelines/5-17>



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Adapted from HPEPH's Pedometer Lending Program for Communities & Workplaces