

# Benefits of Health and Physical Activity to the Province of Alberta

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## Physical Activity and Health

The largest killers of Albertans are directly related to physical inactivity

- The vast majority of Albertans (91%) believe that regular physical activity keeps them healthy and 87% agree that physical activity will reduce serious health problems, however, 26% of Albertans never participate in physical activity
- Together, cancer and heart disease are responsible for 46% of deaths in Alberta ([www.cancerboard.ab.ca](http://www.cancerboard.ab.ca))<sup>2</sup>
- In 1997, 190 and 178 deaths/100,000 Albertans were caused by heart disease and cancer respectively ([www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca))<sup>1</sup>
- The most common types of cancer in Alberta are prostate, breast, and colorectal cancer, which also show the strongest preventative link with physical activity ([www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca))<sup>1</sup>
- The risk of colon cancer is reduced by up to 50% for those who are the most physically active as compared to those who are inactive ([www.centre4activeliving.ca](http://www.centre4activeliving.ca))<sup>4</sup>
- Prostate cancer accounts for 32% of incidence among men and breast cancer accounts for 31% among women ([www.cancerboard.ab.ca](http://www.cancerboard.ab.ca))<sup>3</sup>
- There is a downward trend in adult Albertans and their participation in sport and recreation (Alberta Community Development 2003-2004 Annual Report page 15)

Diseases related to physical inactivity are on a large part preventable, and an investment in prevention would pay off in regards to escalating health care costs:

- Healthcare accounts for 1/3 of the provincial budget ([www.alberta-canada.com](http://www.alberta-canada.com))<sup>8</sup>
- Nearly half the population is not taking steps to improve their health (48%) ([www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca))<sup>9</sup>
- 29% of Albertans reported chronic health problems, 16.2% were related to physical activity, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer ([www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca))<sup>10</sup>
- Type II diabetes accounts for 90-95% of diabetes cases in Alberta
- Inactivity and obesity are two of the major risk factors for diabetes
- Those with diabetes visit physicians more than twice as often as those without – 18.8 vs. 8.7 visits annually
- The total cost of diabetes to the provincial government is \$262.3 million/year ([www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca))<sup>10</sup>

## Older adults experience health benefits from moderate physical activity

- 52% of Alberta's seniors are inactive ([www.seniors.gov.ab.ca](http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca))<sup>5</sup>
- Accidental falls were the leading cause of death in Alberta in 1997 ([www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca))<sup>6</sup>
- Falling occurs 20% to 40% less often among those who report high activity levels ([www.centre4activeliving.ca](http://www.centre4activeliving.ca))<sup>4</sup>
- By 2026, 1 in 5 Albertans will be seniors, so it is important to prevent disease now, to avoid over-whelming the system ([www.seniors.gov.ab.ca](http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca))<sup>5</sup>
- Flexibility and balance activities are recommended everyday for older adults, but only 3.3% of Alberta continuing care facilities offer daily flexibility programming (<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca>)<sup>7</sup>

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## Physical Activity and the Community

- Albertans believe their neighbourhood has low-cost or free recreational facilities, but these areas are clustered in Calgary and Edmonton, leaving rural areas lacking in facilities (<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca>)<sup>13</sup>
- By 2005, 77% of sport facilities will be 25 years or older in Alberta
- The two largest barriers to participation are the cost of equipment (52%), and admission costs (51.2%) ([www.cd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca))<sup>14</sup>
- One-third of Albertans report facilities are poorly maintained or not located near their home ([www.cd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca))<sup>14</sup>
- Albertans earning \$100,000 or more report significantly higher levels of leisure-time physical activity than those earning \$30,000–39,999 and \$40,000–59,000.
- Alberta has an average of:
  - 83,000 volunteer sport coaches
  - 64,000 volunteer referees or umpires
  - 252,000 volunteer helpers. ([www.cd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca))<sup>15</sup>
- Each year, Banff National Park receives 8 million visitors, 58% from Alberta, and over half are from Calgary ([www.canadianrockies.net](http://www.canadianrockies.net))<sup>16</sup>
- The potential for physical activity is not being utilized, as backcountry use has decreased from 20,300 user nights in 1975 to 18,000 user nights annually ([www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca))<sup>17</sup>
- Day hiking is nearly unlimited with 1500km of trails, and further steps need to be taken to promote this inexpensive outdoor activity ([www.rockiesguide.com](http://www.rockiesguide.com))<sup>18</sup>

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## **Sport and Child Development**

- Spending more time of physical education does not interfere with academic performance, rather, school athletes have higher grades than non-athletes
- In Alberta 57% of children and youth (age 5 – 17) are not active enough for optimal growth and development ([www.calgaryhealthregion.ca](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca))<sup>19</sup>
- Alberta schools are only dedicating 8.6% of their time to physical education classes, while 10% is recommended ([www.calgaryhealthregion.ca](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca))<sup>20</sup>

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## **Sport and the Economy**

- The 1996 World Figure Skating Championships in Edmonton generated \$10 million in new revenue, and the projected multiple effect is \$43 million
- The average Alberta family spends \$2,136 on sport related events and equipment every year. This adds \$1.32 billion annually to the economy ([www.cd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca))<sup>21</sup>
- Canada Olympic Park creates a \$40 million/year profit, as well as providing recreational and training facilities ([www.ccase.com](http://www.ccase.com))<sup>22</sup>
- Plans to expand COP are expected to draw 1.000.000 visitors/year ([www.ccase.com](http://www.ccase.com))<sup>23</sup>
- Allowing Canadian freestyle skiers to train in Canada will save \$60 000 to \$100 000 in increased US training costs per year ([www.ccase.com](http://www.ccase.com))<sup>24</sup>
- International training facilities will draw athletes from around Canada and the world to Calgary and Alberta
- The 2001 World Championships of Athletics generated \$150 million

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## **Psychological Benefits**

- Physical activity leads to decreases in anxiety and depression and increases in self esteem
- In 1997– 998 1875 Albertans were hospitalized for depression
- In 1997, 414 deaths in Alberta were related to depression (not including suicide)
- Currently, it is estimated that 5.6% of Albertans suffer from depression ([www.premiersadvisory.com](http://www.premiersadvisory.com))<sup>11</sup>

- Mental illness has been shown to respond positively to physical activity ([www.cmha.calgary.ab.ca](http://www.cmha.calgary.ab.ca))<sup>12</sup>

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