

A photograph of three children sitting on a wooden log in a field. The child on the left is a girl with long dark hair, wearing a purple and white jacket and blue jeans, laughing with her mouth open. The child in the middle is a boy with dark hair, wearing a red jacket and light blue pants, looking towards the girl on the left. The child on the right is a girl wearing a blue knit hat, a red jacket, and light blue pants, holding a small blue pedometer in her hand. The background is a field of dry grass and trees.

Get in step

Pedometers help get kids moving

By Barb Gormley

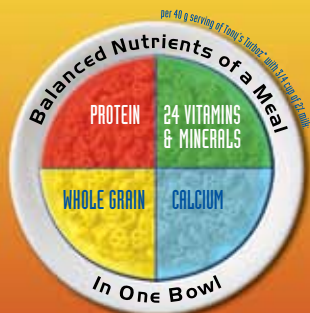
Children madly running on the spot. Refusing to drive home from school with Mom. Repeatedly racing up and down the stairs. Sound like kids gone wild? Not at all. Thomas Eaton and his friend Jessica Innell are simply having fun racking up steps on the pedometers clipped to their jeans. The two eight-year-olds, both Grade 3 students at Withrow Public School in Toronto, don't even care that the nifty \$30 step counters are boosting their activity levels. "It's just fun!" says Thomas. "I like trying to beat

yesterday's score," adds Jessica. Thomas's dad, Jonathan Eaton, notices that when they walk 20 minutes to pick up Thomas's sister from Sparks, "There's definitely more interest in the trip with the pedometer."

Statistics on the health and activity levels of Canadian children are startling: one-third are overweight or obese, more than half are not active enough for optimal growth and development, and fewer than 50 per cent of



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NUTRITION INFORMATION		
	Per 40 g serving Tony's Turboz [®] meal replacement (3/5 cup, 1 1/3 cup)	Per 40 g serving Tony's Turboz [®] meal replacement with 1/2 cup (3/4 cup) 2% milk
ENERGY	150 Cal 630 kJ	240 Cal 1000 kJ
PROTEIN	7.1 g	13.4 g
FAT	2.9 g	6.2 g
POLYUNSATURATES	1.6 g	1.7 g
LINOLEIC ACID	1.2 g	1.2 g
LINOLENIC ACID	0.2 g	0.2 g
MONOUNSATURATES	0.7 g	1.8 g
SATURATES	0.5 g	2.7 g
CHOLESTEROL	0 mg	13 mg
CARBOHYDRATE	27 g	35 g
SUGARS	9 g	17 g
STARCH	15 g	15 g
DIETARY FIBRE	3.2 g	3.2 g
SODIUM	320 mg	410 mg
POTASSIUM	140 mg	420 mg
% OF RECOMMENDED DAILY INTAKE		
VITAMIN A	15 %	25 %
VITAMIN D	0 %	36 %
VITAMIN E	40 %	40 %
VITAMIN C	25 %	25 %
VITAMIN B ₁	30 %	35 %
VITAMIN B ₂	25 %	45 %
NIACIN	25 %	33 %
VITAMIN B ₆	25 %	30 %
FOLACIN	30 %	35 %
VITAMIN B ₁₂	0 %	33 %
PANTOTHENATE	20 %	25 %
BIOTIN	80 %	80 %
CALCIUM	15 %	25 %
PHOSPHORUS	10 %	25 %
MAGNESIUM	15 %	25 %
IRON	30 %	30 %
ZINC	35 %	40 %
IODINE	2 %	40 %
COPPER	25 %	25 %
MANGANESE	50 %	50 %
SELENIUM	10 %	20 %
CHROMIUM	6 %	6 %
MOLYBDENUM	27 %	27 %

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elementary schoolchildren walk to school. Researchers predict dramatic increases in type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases as the result of this lack of activity. Despite the alarm bells, these trends show no signs of stopping.

Research repeatedly tells us that kids who walk, run, hop and skip through their days develop strong muscles and bones, have higher self-esteem, perform better at school and are less likely to be overweight.

Snapping on a pedometer is a great strategy for sedentary children to get moving, says Dr. James Mandigo, associate professor of physical education and kinesiology at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont. "Pedometers work so well because they give instantaneous feedback, the same way video games do. You always know how you're doing, and this builds confidence."

Here's how you can use a pedometer to increase your children's activity levels without even mentioning the word exercise.

Factor in fun

Challenge your kids to guess how many steps it will take to get to the library or corner store. Conduct an experiment by attaching a pedometer to the dog's collar and walking him around the neighbourhood. Will he register the same number of steps, or will four legs double the count? Post a chart so your children can record their steps and bask in the admiration of family and friends. Add up how many kilometres they walk in total, and see how far that might go on a map (for example, how many days does it take to cover the distance from Calgary to Edmonton?)

Set goals

Let your children set their own goals, say the experts. "If it's too hard, kids are likely to say it's not fun and quit," says Andrea Grantham, director of communications and operations at the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

Most six- to 12-year-old girls should walk 12,000 steps per day, and boys need 15,000 steps, advises Lee-Anne Kennedy of Steps Count, a company that specializes in pedometer sales and health promotion. For younger children, focus on having fun with active games and gradually increasing their number of steps over time.

Buy a quality counter

Dorothy Lind, a teacher at McLurg Elementary School in Regina, Sask., recalls her school's first experience and frustration with cheap pedometers from a fast-food chain. "One child's pedometer would read 5,000 steps, and the child beside her would have 20 steps!" recalls Lind.

Kennedy recommends testing a pedometer's accuracy by taking 20 steps; it should display 19 to 21 steps. Buy a sturdy model with a strap to prevent it from disappearing into a snowbank or a toilet if it slips off.

Take a team approach

Wearing your own pedometer and exercising with your children is one of the most effective ways to instill a love of activity. And there's more to family fitness than the physical and health benefits. "Playing sports and games and walking together lets you develop a special bond with your kids," says Mandigo. "It can have the same effect as the time you spend together reading books and enjoying family dinners."