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Active video games don't increase overall daily physical activity levels

Active Healthy Kids Canada releases its official position on active video games

TORONTO (ONTARIO) November 26, 2012– Active video games - also known as “exergames” - are often presented as a possible solution to getting kids to move more; however, following a rigorous scientific review, Active Healthy Kids Canada - and its strategic partners the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute (HALO-CHEO) and ParticipACTION - advises against them as a strategy to help kids be more physically active. So, this holiday season, you might want to think twice about buying an active gaming system for the purpose of helping your child exercise.

“The research shows the movement in active video games may get heart rates up briefly, but usually not enough to meaningfully contribute to the 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity children and youth require daily,” says Dr. Mark Tremblay, Chief Scientific Officer, Active Healthy Kids Canada, and Director of HALO. “Active video games also don’t offer the fresh air, vitamin D, connection with nature and social interactions that come with outdoor active play.”

The research states that active video games are a good way to break up sedentary time, like sitting on the couch, but are not as good as playing real active games or sports. Parents can continue to enjoy active video games with their kids, and let them enjoy playing them with their friends, but should not confuse them as a replacement for real physical activity.

“There have been high hopes for active video games as a new ‘solution’ to the inactivity and obesity crisis in Canadian kids,” says Jennifer Cowie Bonne, CEO, Active Healthy Kids Canada. “In response to many queries for expert opinion, and to provide parents and caregivers with information that’s far more comprehensive than just a few studies, we undertook this scientific review to determine if active video games are a good way to increase daily physical activity.”

Active Healthy Kids Canada convened a panel of international researchers to conduct a systematic review of the best available scientific evidence, examining 1,367 published papers. This research and the process that was undertaken to develop the research have both been submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

“Kids find active video games appealing, but research shows the novelty wears off over time and they don’t stick with them,” says Kelly Murumets, President and CEO, ParticipACTION. “If active video games are on your holiday gift list as a means of getting your kids active, your money might be better spent on skipping ropes, balls, ice skates or other sporting equipment. The more real daily physical activity children can get, the greater the health benefits they will receive.”

About Active Healthy Kids Canada

Established in 1994, Active Healthy Kids Canada strives to be a trusted source for “powering the movement to get kids moving.” Advancing knowledge is the cornerstone of our business, providing the evidence base for our communications and issue advocacy work to increase support for quality, accessible and enjoyable physical activity participation experiences for young people across Canada. In an ongoing effort to advance knowledge to effect change, we release the annual Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, a comprehensive assessment of the current state of physical activity among Canadian children and youth. For more information, please visit www.activehealthykids.ca

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For more information on the Active Healthy Kids Canada position on active video games or to schedule an interview or speak to a spokesperson, please contact:

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