

Summer time often means no play time for kids: Survey ^[1]

Author: CTV News

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EXCERPTS

For kids, summer means a break from homework. But a new report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario suggests it also means a break from physical activity.

The new survey found that because of costs and scheduling, a lot of parents are having trouble finding child care solutions ^[1] that keep their kids active.

The survey, conducted in May by Ipsos-Reid Group surveyed 500 Greater Toronto Area parents of 562 children ages 6 to 12. It reveals that only one-quarter of parents had completed summer activity arrangements for their children.

What's more, many cash-strapped parents of school-aged kids said that finding child care solutions that were affordable, convenient and safe were greater priorities than finding programs promoting physical activity.

For some parents -- particularly single parents and those with several children -- cost is a major issue. More than half (54 per cent) of parents anticipated they will be spending over \$500 per child this summer and a quarter (26 per cent) are spending \$1,000 or more on summer activities.

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"We used to think that kids in the summertime would automatically be out from dusk to dawn. More and more, because of security concerns and the fact that in most families, both parents are working... that opportunity for kids to be active all day long simply doesn't exist," he told CTV's Canada AM Monday.

When the survey asked parents where their children would be spending most of their time this summer, the most common responses were:

- with a parent or parents (46 per cent)
- at day camps (17 per cent)
- or with grandparents (8 per cent)

The type of caregiver strongly influences how active the children will be. It's expected that two-thirds (67 per cent) of children who spend most of their time in a day camp will be vigorously active, dropping to 48 per cent among those spending most of their time with parents and 29 per cent for those with their grandparents.

Nine out of 10 parents think their children will spend some or most of their time in outdoor active play, and almost four out of 10 think they will be spending most of their time outdoors.

But being outdoors doesn't necessarily translate into being physically active. According to the Foundation's survey, parents are relying on informal play to keep their kids active. Only one in five children will be spending a lot of time swimming, one in seven in day camps, and one in eight in organized sports this summer.

Di Buono notes that 28 per cent of Ontario's children overweight and obese, today's children are at risk of developing long-term health effects such as heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes at a much too early age - through no fault of their own.

"Our kids live in a society in which calorie-dense and often nutritionally-poor foods are too readily available to them and, compared to past generations it is not as easy to be active," Di Buono said in a news release.

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