

Healthy Eating and Active Living

KEY MESSAGES:

- Vegetable and fruit consumption is declining, with only 21.7% of people in Algoma who are 12 years old and over, consuming vegetables and fruit 5 times a day in 2020⁽¹⁾.
- The physical activity levels of youth in Algoma are low. In 2019, only 33.3% of youth aged 12-17 met daily physical activity guidelines⁽²⁾.
- In Algoma, physical activity levels decline after age 50. In 2020, 49.2% of people aged 50-64 years and 43.2% of people aged 65 and over were active according to the recommendations for their age group⁽³⁾.
- The majority of youth in Algoma (79.7%) use electronic devices before falling asleep⁽²⁾.
- The environments in which we live, work and play have an impact on healthy behaviours and can be modified to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Healthy behaviours

Enjoying an active lifestyle along with nutritious foods and beverages, while limiting sedentary behaviour (including screen time) and getting enough restful sleep can positively impact the health and well-being of people in all age groups. In children, they support healthy growth and development and provide them with the energy and nutrients needed to learn and perform to the best of their abilities. In adults, these behaviours can improve overall quality of life and reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.

Food and nutrition



[Canada's Food Guide](#) (CFG) recommends consuming a variety of nutritious foods and beverages each day, including vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and protein foods (with an emphasis on plant-based proteins) for positive health benefits. In 2019 CFG was revised to focus on overall eating patterns with the promotion of a simple plate concept: fill half of the plate with vegetables and fruit, a quarter with protein foods and a quarter with whole grains.

Vegetable and fruit consumption has been declining among some populations

In 2015, 26.6% of people aged 12 and over in Algoma ate vegetables and fruit 5 or more times a day. This number decreased to 21.7% in 2020⁽¹⁾.

The number of youth aged 12 - 19 who ate vegetables and fruit **less than 5** times a day increased from 73.3% in 2016 to 90.9% in 2020. Algoma's rate in 2020 was notably higher than Ontario (80.6%) and other NE PHUs (75.9%)⁽¹⁾.



Vegetable and fruit consumption is low in Algoma

In 2020, only 21.7% of people aged 12 and over in Algoma ate vegetables and fruit 5 or more times a day. This rate was comparable to Ontario (21.3%) and slightly lower than other NE PHUs (24.2%)⁽¹⁾.

Eating behaviours, such as preparing and eating meals together at home, eating mindfully, and respecting body diversity also play a crucial role in supporting health and well-being. Establishing **positive eating behaviours and a healthy relationship** with food at an early age through positive role modelling, experiential learning, and sharing intergenerational knowledge helps build the foundation for lifelong health.

Percentage of children who ate an evening meal with their family for 6 – 7 days a week⁽²⁾



Children 5 - 11 years
59.8%

Children 12 - 17 years
53.5%



It is important to note that food intake and eating behaviours are significantly impacted by social, economic, physical, and environmental factors. As noted in the Social Determinants of Health & Health Equity chapter, **food insecurity is a barrier to eating well for 1 in 5 households in Algoma**. Creating policies to support equitable access to nutritious food can have a positive impact on food choices and food environments across Algoma.

Algoma Public Health (APH) also seeks opportunities to promote and enhance food literacy and availability within the community. APH collaborates with the Ministry of Health, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and local school boards to coordinate implementation of the [Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program](#), which provides two servings per week of vegetables and fruit to all elementary students in Algoma.

Physical activity

[Canada's 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#) provides recommendations for physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for all ages. For optimal health benefits, the following levels of physical activity are recommended:



Child and youth (5 - 17 years old):
An accumulated time of at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity⁽⁴⁾.

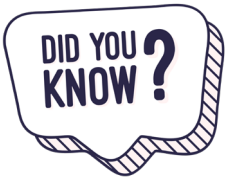


Adults (18+ years old):
An accumulated time of at least 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity⁽⁴⁾.

In general, physical activity levels in Algoma are below what is recommended, although similar or slightly higher compared to the province. **Males are notably more active than females and physical activity levels decline with older age.**

Children and youth

- In a 2019 survey, 1 in 3 (33.3%) youth (12 – 17 years old) in Algoma reported meeting the physical activity guidelines. In comparison, 1 in 4 (26.4%) Ontario youth met the guidelines⁽²⁾.
- In 2019, 33.7% of Algoma youth (12 – 17 year olds) engaged in physical activity with their parents or caregivers weekly⁽²⁾.



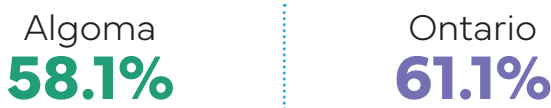
Positive role modelling and being active together is a great way to increase physical activity. 60 minutes of a parent’s physical activity adds 15 minutes to a child’s average daily physical activity⁽⁵⁾. [Active for Life](#) has a variety of activities, games, and resources for parents, caregivers, and educators.

- 1 in 4 (26.2%) children and youth (aged 3 to 17 years old) in Algoma are not participating in organized sports. This is comparable to 25.6% of Ontario’s children and youth⁽⁶⁾.

There can be multiple reasons for why children and youth are not participating in organized sports, including facing barriers related to income and transportation. Efforts should be made to make organized sports inclusive and accessible for everyone so all can benefit.

The value of **unstructured play** should not be overlooked. Unstructured play (indoors and outdoors) occurs when children follow their instincts, ideas, and interests without an imposed outcome. It supports healthy growth and development and benefits physical, mental, emotional, and social health⁽⁷⁾. **Active outdoor play** is a component of unstructured play which can help children build resilience, self-regulation, and skills to deal with stress.

Percentage of youth (12 – 17 years old) who participated in outdoor activities in the past 7 days⁽²⁾

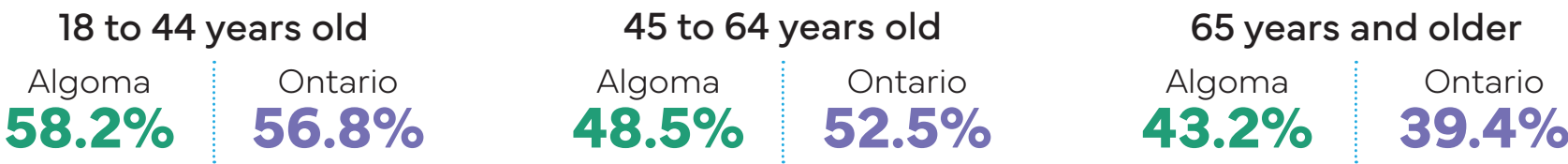


Percentage of youth (12 – 17 years old) who spent time outdoors in the past 7 days in Algoma⁽²⁾



Adults

Percentage of adults who were considered active according to physical activity guidelines in 2020⁽³⁾





Staying active is an important part of healthy aging. Algoma Public Health is committed to working with municipalities, community organizations and service providers to provide **Age-Friendly Communities**. Age-Friendly Communities “ensure that local policies, programs and services are inclusive and support the social and physical environments that enable Ontarians to live safe, active and meaningful lives”⁽⁸⁾.

Healthy built environment

The way communities are designed and built lays the foundation for healthy living⁽⁹⁾. Built environment refers to anything that is human created, such as buildings, parks, and neighbourhoods. It also includes land use patterns and transportation systems⁽¹⁰⁾.

Connected streets, bike lanes, multi-use paths, sidewalks and public transportation routes can increase physical activity and support active transportation which benefits both human and planetary health⁽⁹⁾. Walk and Bike Scores show how walkable (e.g., walking routes to stores, schools, parks and restaurants) and bikeable (e.g., bike infrastructure topography, destinations and road connectivity) an area is on a scale of 0-100⁽¹¹⁾.

Walk and bike score for cities and towns in Algoma⁽¹¹⁾

	Walk Score ⁱⁱⁱ 	Bike Score ^{iv} 
Elliot Lake (downtown only)	70 (very walkable)	19 (somewhat bikeable)
Wawa (downtown only)	62 (somewhat walkable)	53 (bikeable)
Blind River (downtown only)	61 (somewhat walkable)	51 (bikeable)
Sault Ste. Marie (whole city)	28 (car dependent)	42 (somewhat bikeable)

Percentage of children 3 - 17 who used active transportation to travel to school in the past 7 days in 2019⁽²⁾



Algoma
7.5%

Ontario
16.5%

Percentage of adults 18 - 65 who used active modes of transportation such as walking or cycling to work in 2019⁽¹²⁾



Algoma
39.1%

Ontario
45.1%

Green spaces, public parks, outdoor play areas and recreation facilities provide places for people of all ages to be active and social. [HealthyPlan.City](#) has maps exploring a variety of conditions such as large natural spaces, parks, and recreation and sports facilities.

Creating healthy built environments is a shared responsibility. APH works with communities to support healthy community design policies and long-term planning for aging populations and climate resiliency.

Sedentary behaviour and screen time

Sedentary behaviour refers to activities that do not increase energy expenditure substantially above resting level, such as sleeping, sitting, laying down, watching television, and other forms of screen-based entertainment. Reducing sedentary behaviour and moving more can improve health, quality of life, and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Canada’s 24-Hour Movement Guidelines provide the following recommendations for sedentary behaviour and screen time



Child and youth (5 - 17 years):
No more than **2 hours per day** of recreational screen time and limited sitting for extended periods⁽⁴⁾.

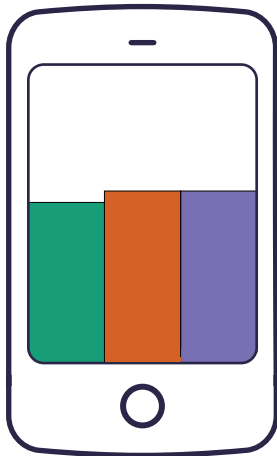


Adults (18+ years):
No more than **3 hours per day** of recreational screen time and break-up long periods of sitting⁽⁴⁾.

Screen time refers to time spent on screen-based behaviours, such as watching TV and using a smartphone, tablet or computer. Recreational screen time includes time spent on screens that is not related to school or work⁽⁴⁾.

Screens are a big part of daily life as they are frequently used for education, work, and entertainment. Digital devices help us communicate and stay connected, however there are health-related concerns when they are used too much. Spending prolonged periods of time on screens takes time away from engaging in other health-promoting activities and can negatively impact mental, cardiovascular, and sleep health⁽¹³⁾.

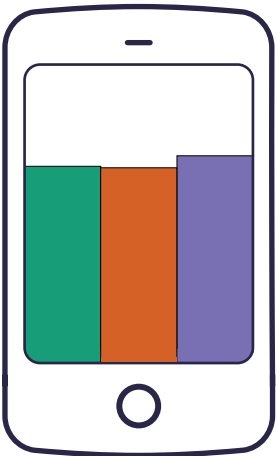
3- to 4-year-olds who met the recommended screen time of one hour or less per day



Algoma
50.2%
NE PHUs
54.5%
Ontario
54.1%

1 in 2 (50.2%) 3 to 4 year olds in Algoma, met the recommended screen time limit of one hour or less per day⁽¹⁴⁾.

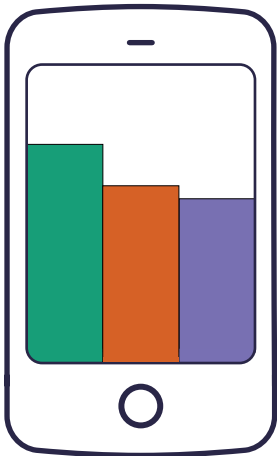
5-to 11-year-olds who met the recommended screen time of two hours or less per day



Algoma
62.3%
NE PHUs
61.5%
Ontario
65.9%

About 3 in 5 (62.3%) children and youth ages 5 to 11 years in Algoma, met the recommended screen time limit of two hours or less per day⁽¹⁴⁾.

12-to 17-year-olds who met the recommended screen time of less than two hours per day



Algoma
69.6%
NE PHUs
54.6%
Ontario
51.5%

7 in 10 (69.6%) youth ages 12 to 17 years in Algoma, met the recommended screen time limit of two hours or less per day⁽¹⁴⁾.

Using screens before bed is not recommended as it can lead to difficulty falling asleep and poor quality of sleep⁽¹⁵⁾. As age increases, more children use electronic devices before sleeping. **Algoma has a higher percentage of children and youth who use electronic devices before sleeping compared to Ontario overall^(2, 14).**

Too much screen time can have a negative impact on children. It can hinder how they think, including academic performance, decision making, and controlling and monitoring their everyday behaviours. Screen time has also been linked to language, social and emotional development, and lifelong mental health.

Parents and caregivers can support less screen time by paying attention to what and how much children are watching, getting involved and engaging with children off screens, modelling good screen behaviours, setting boundaries, and talking to youth about the impacts of screen time. For more tips on setting limits on screen time you can visit [About Kids Health by SickKids](#).

Sleep health

Getting enough good-quality sleep is essential for brain function, mental health, a strong immune system, and feeling well overall^(16, 17). Not sleeping well can negatively impact mood, energy level, concentration, and behaviour. Over the long-term, poor-quality sleep can increase risk for heart disease, cognitive decline, and depression^(18, 19).

Sleep hygiene refers to habits and practices that, when practiced on a regular basis can help promote good sleep. Visit [Sleep On It Canada](#) for more information and tips for better sleep.

Canada’s 24-Hour Movement Guidelines recommends consistent bed and wake up times and getting the following amounts of sleep

3 - 4 years old	10-13 hours ⁽²⁰⁾
5 - 13 years old	9-11 hours ⁽²¹⁾
14 - 17 years old	8-10 hours ⁽²¹⁾
18 - 65 years old	7-9 hours ⁽²²⁾
65+ years old	7-8 hours ⁽²³⁾

Use of electronic devices before sleeping, by age group^(2, 14)

3 - 4 years old	-	NE PHUs 14.0%	Ontario 12.6%
5 - 11 years old	Algoma 24.7%	NE PHUs 22.7%	Ontario 22.3%
12 - 17 years old	Algoma 80.9%	NE PHUs 79.9%	Ontario 74.5%

Most children and youth (3 to 17 years old) in Algoma meet the recommendations for sleep. However, the trend shows the number decreasing with age⁽²⁾

3 - 4 years old	Algoma 89.7%	NE PHUs 90.3%	Ontario 87.5%
5 - 11 years old	Algoma 80.5%	NE PHUs 86.1%	Ontario 85.4%
12 - 17 years old	Algoma 75.2%	NE PHUs 66.6%	Ontario 62.0%

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