

What are the benefits of physical activity and how can I, or my child, get involved?

Physical activity has been shown to improve fitness levels, improve focus, and enhance general motor function for autistic people many of whom struggle with motor coordination. Sports, exercise, and other physical activities can lead to improvements in mental health and quality of life for those on the spectrum including sleeping and eating. It can also provide opportunities to meet others and develop strong friendships.

Autistic people have an increased incidence of disordered eating and compulsive exercise than the general population. Connect with the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) at nedic.ca or the Calgary Eating Disorders Program (CEDP) for education and support.

- Explore different kinds of physical activity to determine the right fit for you or your child. Some examples of activities to try include yoga, hiking, soccer, swimming, weight-training, baseball, martial arts, skiing, walking, bowling, skating, and tobogganing.
- Keep it simple. Before joining a program, buying specialized equipment, or paying for expensive memberships, try practical, daily adjustments. Try to increase the amount of walking by taking the stairs, getting off the bus one stop earlier, or parking your car further from your destination to help you gain a few extra steps.
- Search for free or reduced-fee memberships, classes, or other community offerings. Apply for the Fair Entry Pass if you are low-income and living in Calgary. Find out what your community offers.
- Expand your definition of health to include more than just nutrition and physical movement. Healthy behaviors also include getting enough sleep, drinking enough water, and getting enough vitamins from food and/or supplements. A healthy lifestyle also involves understanding health conditions, scheduling medical appointments, managing medication.
- Find and connect to the professional supports, agencies, and resources that can help you and your child manage their health care needs.

RESOURCES

The Resource Centre (a Sinneave Family Foundation initiative) does not endorse or guarantee the exhaustive, complete, accurate or up-to-date nature of information provided and does not assume any risk for the outcome of information or referrals provided.

EATING DISORDER SUPPORTS AND EDUCATION

National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC)

NEDIC is an organization that provides eating disorder education, resources, support, and referrals to people in Canada. They offer a toll-free phone help-line and an instant chat feature on their website.

Phone: 1.866.633.4220 (Toll-free helpline open from 7 am to 7 pm MST Monday thru Thursday and Friday from 7 am to 3 pm MST)

Website: nedic.ca (Instant-chat helpline available, same hours as phone line)

Calgary Eating Disorders Program (CEDP)

The Calgary Eating Disorders Program (CEDP) is a physician referral based program that offers treatment for people diagnosed with an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and other specified feeding or eating disorder. The program is offered across three sites with inpatient, day treatment and outpatient options.

Brochure: albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/arp/if-hp-arp-cz-eatingdisorders-qr.pdf

HEALTH AND FITNESS APPS AND WEBSITES

Please be cautious when using online resources. Engaging in programming alone can increase the risk of injuries. Eating disorders and compulsive exercise disorders thrive in secrecy. Always inform your health care providers before starting any exercise or nutrition plans.

Bodybuilding.com

This website is appropriate for all skill levels. It offers workout videos and nutrition advice with free and paid subscription services.

Website: bodybuilding.com/workout-plans/

Breathe2Relax

Provides information on the effects of stress on the body and gives instructions and various exercises to help combat stress. This app is a great resource for regulating your emotions and coping with stress.

Website: breathe2relax.soft112.com/

Fitocracy

It is an online game and social network that aims to use “gamification” to help users improve their fitness. Users log their daily fitness and “level up”. Individuals can also compete with friends. **Competitiveness is a common feature of disordered eating and compulsive exercise, be mindful of your needs and learn about red flags for eating disorder behaviours.**

Website: fitocracy.com

Health at Every Size (HAES)

Focuses on respect, critical awareness, and compassionate self-care. Celebrates bodies of every size and offers resources on fitness and nutritional supports that are focused on wellness, not weight-loss. Includes exercise programs from chairs and bed.

Website: haescommunity.com/find/

Y360

Virtual workouts offered by the YMCA.

Website: ymca360.org

HEALTH AND FITNESS GROUPS

Autism Asperger's Friendship Society (AAFS) - Stepping Out

Social exercise group that focuses on overall health and wellness in a structured but relaxed social setting. There are 2 walking groups, one for ages 18+ and another for 17 & under. They also offer a variety of other recreational activities. Activities are free for AAFS members. Membership is available for \$25 annually.

Phone: 403.246.7383
Address: 7720-D Fairmount Drive SE, Calgary, AB T2H 0X7
Email: brittany@aafscalgary.com
Website: aafscalgary.wildapricot.org/stepping-out

Beast Mode Fitness First Experience

This group is for young adults with ASD (18 to 30 years of age) and is designed to promote an interest in developing mobility, flexibility, strength training, cardio conditioning, teamwork, and social skills related to gym etiquette. The importance of creating a comfortable environment and encouraging a team atmosphere is a priority. This group takes place at the University of Calgary, Kinesiology Building.

Contact: Nick Lapointe
Phone: 403.220.4374
Email: nicholas.lapointe@ucalgary
Website: sinneavefoundation.org/sinneave_work_item/beast-mode-fitness

Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing (CADS) - Calgary

CADS lessons are available to people with a wide variety of diagnoses and skills. Ski/Snowboard School is organized into different groups, including a group that is inclusive of people with ASD. They have a specific group for people with learning disabilities and challenges with impulsivity that can interfere with their ability to learn new skills in group settings or attend to instructions. They also offer supports for people with physical disabilities and any combination of instructional needs.

Phone: 403.286.8050
Address: CADS Calgary, Canada Olympic Park, 88 Canada Olympic Road SW, Calgary, AB T3B 5R5
Email: info@cadscalgary.ca
Website: cadscalgary.ca

Calgary Recreation

A searchable online database of registered and drop-in programs around Calgary. Able to filter by "Category" (of activity), "Location", and "Age Group", and includes a map of locations.

Website: calgary.ca/CSPS/Recreation/Pages/Disability-information-Recreation.aspx

Disabled Sailing Association of Alberta

A great sports program that enables individuals of all ages and with various needs to participate in sailing activities in a safe and supportive environment. There are options to work or volunteer with the program, and participate in regattas and other competitions. Costs associated.

Phone: 403.225.8050 Lakeside Office 403.238.0689
Address: P.O. Box 36091, Lakeview Post Office, Calgary, AB T3E 7C6
Website: dsaalberta.org

MoMo Mixed Ability Dance Theatre

For all abilities - weekly classes at the community level as well as more experienced performance levels. Community classes work with creative movement and theatre games to provide a morning or afternoon full of physical activity, creative expression and plenty of fun. Costs associated.

Phone: 403.452.1220
Email: info@momodancetheatre.org
Website: momomovement.ca

Peter Lougheed Provincial Park

Offers over 20kms of accessible trails and year-round accessible wilderness lodging.

Website: albertaparks.ca/parks/kananaskis/peter-lougheed-pp/

Rocky Mountain Adaptive Sports and Recreation

Connected with Sunshine Village Ski and Snowboard School (Banff) and Canmore Nordic Centre, various programs and lessons are available. Winter sports include: downhill skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and dog sledding. Summer sports include: hiking, road biking, mountain biking, golf, frisbee golf, tennis, horse riding, swimming, white water rafting, ropes course, and kayaking/canoeing. Costs associated.

Phone: 403.431.1354
Address: Rocky Mountain Adaptive, 2-201 Carey, Canmore, AB T1W 2R7
Email: info@rockymountainadaptive.com
Website: rockymountainadaptive.com

Special Olympics Calgary

Programs are open to individuals of all skill levels with an intellectual disability, ages 2 and up.

Phone: 403.735.1022
Address: 14, 2180 Pegasus Way NE, Calgary, AB T2E 8M5
Email: info@specialolympicscalgary.ca
Website: specialolympicscalgary.ca

Sport 4 Life Cochrane

Sport 4 Life Cochrane (S4LC) is a non-profit organization that inspires commitment to physical literacy in children and youth through education and training, resources, mentorship, advocacy, and networking. This program serves other physical activity providers and promoters.

Address: Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre, 800 Griffin Road East, Cochrane, AB T4C 2B8

Email: infoS4LC@gmail.com

Website: sport4lifecochrane.com

Vecova Recreation Centre

A public facility that provides recreation and leisure opportunities to Calgarians of all ages and abilities. They have a warmer salt-water swimming pool that is more suitable for individuals with sensory processing differences. They also offer a variety of programs and services and provide a welcoming environment for individuals with special needs.

Phone: 403.284.2231

Address: 3304-33rd Street NW, Calgary, AB T2L 2A6

Email: recinfo@vecova.ca

Website: vecova.ca

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