Dear Parents,

Last Friday I was fortunate to be able to attend the Primary Health & Physical Education (HPE) Conference run by the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACPER).

I learned some new games and activities for teaching locomotor skills, I heard about how I can use Information Communication Technology to improve my PE program and I got some interesting ideas on how to plan a quality Health & PE program. All very useful information!

But by far my most interesting learning came from Professor Jo Salmon a researcher from Deakin University. Jo spoke about ‘Building a Healthy and Active Culture in the Primary School’. Her latest study sees her looking into the effects of sedentary behaviour on children.

Jo explained that as animals, we are born to defy gravity – we need to move! But more often than not these days, we find ourselves sitting – at our desks, in front of the TV, at meetings, even when we socialise over lunch – and for long periods of time.

We tend to think that because we run or go to the gym three times a week that our exercise job is done. But Jo questioned this – She said that all the sitting we do, is not compensated for by our bursts of exercise; that we need to interrupt our periods of sitting with short standing / moving breaks. This will get the blood flowing, get our muscles moving and make our brains more alert and open to learning. And of course if it’s good enough for us as adults, it’s certainly going to be good for our children.

In everyone but especially the young, physical activity aids cognitive development, helps with good bone health, builds self-esteem and guards against other health risks such as heart disease and obesity. The more of it we can do, the better it will be for us and our children. The younger we start the better it will be. Jo believes we need to engineer physical activity back into our lives. With technology ever present in our lives, physical activity is becoming less and less.

She reported that her study had found that most children spend most of their waking hours sitting and that very few children meet the government’s recommendations for physical activity.

I’ve listed them on the back… How does your family stack up? Are you up and about most of the time or do you do lots of sitting? If your family is a little more on the ‘couch potato’ side and find it hard to get going, there are also a few ideas that might help you to get your family moving.

Margaret Masseni (Student Wellbeing Leader)
“Being involved in high levels of activity is known to influence the development of important coping and stress management skills in children.”

“Childhood is a period of rapid brain development and physical activity in early life may have beneficial effects on the developing brain.”

Recent studies showed ‘that low physical activity in childhood was associated with a 35 per cent increased risk of reporting depression in adulthood’.

‘Exercising early in life may be critical to adult health.’

Australia’s Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children (5-12 years)

For health benefits,

- At least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day
- Include a variety of aerobic activities, including some vigorous intensity activity
- On at least 3 days per week, activities that strengthen muscle and bone

For additional health benefits

- Children should engage in more activity – up to several hours per day

To reduce health risks

- Minimise time spent being sedentary every day
- Limit use of electronic media for entertainment (e.g. television, seated electronic games and computer use) to no more than two hours a day – lower levels are associated with reduced health risks
- Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible

FACT SHEETS about Physical Activity are available on our School Website: WELLBEING: Resources for Parents

THINK ABOUT.....

...Taking a 2 minute activity break after every 30 minutes of sitting.

...Making one of your meetings or catch ups a ‘walking event’.

...How you will model great physical activity habits to your kids. If they see you do, they are more likely to do it

SET SOME FAMILY GOALS...

This week the ___________ family will try to be more active by

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