

Helping Canadians with Disability/Chronic Disease Get Physically Active: Tip Sheets for Intermediaries

For Canadians with a disability, regular physical activity may be even more important than it is for the rest of the population. For a person with a disability, an active lifestyle can open doors to increased health, social inclusion and self-empowerment - doors which might otherwise remain closed. Access to physical activity can eliminate the likelihood of acquiring secondary health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease. Being active builds resiliency and can provide an all-important outlet for a person with a disability.

These tip sheets are designed to provide general information in support of Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines, developed by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology.

HEARING IMPAIRMENTS - DEAFNESS / HARD OF HEARING

General Information

Facts and Figures

- Deafness and hard of hearing are prominent in Canada. 350,000 Canadians are deaf, while 3.15 million Canadians are hard of hearing.
- Persons with congenital deafness may not have a complete understanding of the English language, as it is often viewed as a second language. The first language for a person who is deaf is visual or gestural (sign).
- It is said that communication depends 7% on what is said, 38% on how it is said and 55% on body language. Therefore, what a person sees is very important.

What is Deafness and Hard of Hearing?

Deafness is defined as the absence of functional hearing, where an individual is reliant on visual means of communication such as sign language, lip-reading, reading and writing. An individual who is hard of hearing can understand some speech through their ears. For these individuals, hearing loss can vary from mild to severe. Individuals who are hard of hearing may use hearing aids to enhance their hearing.

It is important to note that individuals can either be born deaf or hard of hearing (congenital), or they can acquire a hearing impairment later in life (acquired).

Typically, it takes more time to teach a new skill to someone who has a congenital disability than someone who acquired a disability later in life. Again, this will vary depending on the individual involved.

Impact of Deafness and Hard of Hearing

- It is important to note that deafness is considered a culture and is rarely seen as a disability within the deaf community.
- Persons with congenital hearing impairments may have impaired speech and language development, and cognitive skills may be impacted.

- A person who is deaf or hard of hearing will rarely lack physical literacy skills solely due to their hearing impairment.
- Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may face difficulties following verbal instructions in large spaces and/or with large groups, verbal communication that is fast-paced, and unstructured group conversations.
- A person with a hearing impairment may grow frustrated and lose interest if these barriers are not considered.
- Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may face social isolation.

Working with a Person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Tips for Getting Active

Being physically active and exercising is beneficial for individuals of all abilities in a variety of ways including socially, physically, physiologically, and psychologically. Ensuring everyone, including those with a hearing impairment, have opportunities to effectively engage in physical activity is essential to their personal development.

Creating a barrier free environment to enable those who are deaf or hard of hearing to be exposed to the benefits of physical activity is definitely attainable.

Teaching and Communication Techniques

- Ensure all instructors are informed that they will be working with someone with a hearing impairment.
- Bring in an interpreter to work directly with the participant if necessary.
- When communicating orally, try to maintain eye contact with the participant you are speaking to. Attempt to speak slowly and clearly.
- Position yourself in appropriate lighting so you can be seen clearly.
- Break up sentences and try to simplify communication where possible.
- Encourage the participant to ask questions as needed.
- Reduce environmental distractions such as background noise.
- Reinforce verbal information with written, text and visual materials.
- In a group setting:
 - Consider the layout of the room. If in a classroom, use a circle technique so everyone is able to see each other's face.
 - Have name tags available for initial meetings.
 - Point to the person who is talking in a group setting.
 - Ensure one person is speaking at a time.
 - Avoid talking with your back to your audience.
 - Speak closely in a group setting.
 - Ensure everyone is included in the informal and social conversations.

How to Adapt Rules and Equipment

- In deaf sports, common auditory cues are made visible (i.e., a flashing light tells swimmers when to start; a flag or arm can indicate the start to runners; and umpire signals can inform players of the call).
- Have a pencil and paper readily available for communication.

- For those who are hard of hearing, use an amplification system if available.
- Use visual aids, demonstrations, flip charts, written agendas and handouts.
- If using video for instruction, ensure it is captioned.

RESOURCES:

<http://cad.ca/issues-positions/statistics-on-deaf-canadians/>

<http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/facts/en/>

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Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability

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