

# Recreation & Mental Health



## What is Recreation?

The Canadian National Recreation Agenda states that recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing<sup>1</sup>. The World Health Organization defines it as engaging in any form of play, recreational or leisure activity, such as informal or organized play and sports, programmes of physical fitness, relaxation, amusement or diversion, going to art galleries, museums, cinemas or theatres; engaging in crafts or hobbies, reading for enjoyment, playing musical instruments; sightseeing, tourism and travelling for pleasure<sup>2</sup>.

For more information on ways to enhance your mental health, visit [www.novascotia.cmha.ca](http://www.novascotia.cmha.ca)

# Benefits of Recreation

**Social:** Social benefits of recreation activities include:

- the creation of social connections through expanded social networks (e.g., you can make new friends)
- opportunities for social connection (e.g., you can feel a sense of connection and belonging)
- change in social skills (e.g., you can focus less on yourself and more on others)

In short, recreation is an opportunity for social inclusion, where the activity can increase your access to community and community resources.

**Psychological:** Mental health improvements from recreation activities include:

- increased self-esteem and Flow (i.e., absorption in the present moment)
- a sense of accomplishment
- increased self-confidence
- reduced stress and increased ability to cope
- improved quality of life and life satisfaction
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**Physical:** Regular physical activity of moderate intensity – such as walking, cycling, or doing sports – has significant benefits for health. Regular and adequate levels of physical activity:

- improve muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness;
- improve bone and functional health;
- reduce the risk of hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, various types of cancer (including breast cancer and colon cancer), and depression;
- reduce the risk of falls as well as hip or vertebral fractures; and are fundamental to energy balance and weight control.

**Types of Recreation:**

- **Sports** (baseball, soccer, basketball, badminton, volleyball, hockey, etc.)
- **Adventure** (biking, skiing, rock climbing, etc.)
- **Entertainment** (singing, dancing, watching movies, listening to music, etc.)
- **Amusement** (video & computer games, internet surfing, tourism, partying, shopping, visiting parks or museums, etc.)

For more recreation ideas visit <https://novascotiainconnect.cioc.ca/> or <http://www.recreationns.ns.ca/>

