

Physical Activity Pyramid for Young Children



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Being active early in life can go a long way in helping children develop lifelong healthy behaviors with respect to physical activity. Children that are routinely physically active are more likely to listen and participate actively in school. They tend to sleep better at night and not get tired as easily during daily routines.

The proportion of overweight children has doubled since 1980 due to an increase in sedentary leisure time activities such as computer games and television. The Surgeon General's report clearly indicates that the health benefits of routine physical activity are not limited to adults. Children who participate regularly in physical activity build healthy bones and muscles. Regular physical activity helps control weight, build lean muscle and reduce fat. Activity also reduces the risk of development of many disease processes that are becoming evident in children, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Physical Activity can be as simple as moving around, dancing, family activities, or free play. Everybody can be physically active regardless of age, size, skill, or ability level.

The Physical Activity Pyramid for Young Children provides examples of ways children can be physically active. The following list briefly describes each level of the pyramid:

EVERY DAY—Choose from these suggestions or create your own, the goal is to do some movement everyday. Examples include going for walks, playing outside, helping with housework and free play.

OFTEN—Dancing, playing ball, and bike riding describe activities in this category. Try to do activities in this category as often as possible.

SOMETIMES—Many of the activities in the *Sometimes* category make great family activities. Examples include things such as swimming, swinging, and playing in the park. These activities may not be immediately available due to equipment or facility needs.

Children should get at least 60 minutes to several hours of physical activity each day, preferably on all days of the week. The activity does not have to be all at one time and can be spaced throughout the day.



TIPS ON HOW TO GET KIDS MOVING:

- *Participate with the children in physical activity.*
- *Model Behavior: Set a good example.*
- *Emphasize participation in activity and enjoyment over competition.*
- *Learn what they like and help them do it.*
- *Go outside.*
- *Help them learn while they play.*
- *Involve families and parents.*
- *Allow variety. Introduce new skills and movements.*
- *Provide time for unstructured play each day.*
- *Don't use physical activity as punishment.*
- *Plan activities for the whole family or group*
- *Provide encouragement.*

MAKE IT FUN!

CUT DOWN ON—These are low movement activities. Over a period of time, inactivity may increase the risk for health problems that includes childhood overweight and cardiovascular diseases. Try to limit the amount of time children spend watching television, movies, using the computer, and playing video games. They may set a pattern for future inactivity as well as diminished social and motor skills.

Activities can be adapted to fit any need, size, or ability level. Be creative. Provide regular opportunities for active, physical play. Children can develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and confidence to adopt and maintain active lifestyles.

Stay Safe When You Play

- Children should not swim without adult supervision.
- Pay attention to weather related issues such as extreme hot or cold temperatures. Wear proper clothing. Use multiple layers to dress for cold weather.
- Remember to use sunscreen.
- Stay on sidewalks or trails if available.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after activity, regardless of the weather or if you think you are thirsty.

**Help children
get moving
for a lifetime of
*good health.***