

The role of adults

Role-modelling an active lifestyle is just as important as giving your child time, space and materials for play. Children learn from watching, listening and copying what happens around them. Be active in your own life and show children that you think it is important and fun. When your child sees you being active, they will often want to join in or try the same activities and movements as you.

You do not always have to be involved in your child's play. However, you do need to supervise – especially if children are playing with new play items or in challenging play spaces. The important thing is that your child feels good about what they can do when they are active. The family environment plays a crucial role in helping children to enjoy physical activity – sometimes, you will be your child's favourite play mate, particularly during the early months of life. It is important to be positive in your voice, your praise and encouragement for exploring new ways to move. Show your child that you enjoy being active, too.



GET UP & GROW

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD



The role of parents in children's active play



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing



Even before your child can walk or talk, providing regular opportunities to move freely and interact with people forms a foundation for lifelong physical, social and intellectual skills.

Free movement and child-led active play is the best form of physical activity for your child. Providing plenty of chances for your child to make up their own games and activities is an enjoyable and suitable way for your child to learn and grow.

Offering active play choices

Basic movement skills such as throwing, jumping, running, dancing and balancing can all be explored with simple play items such as boxes, hoops, pot and pans, brooms, logs and tyres. Play items don't always have to be toys – making play items out of everyday items with your child can be a fun and cheap activity to do together. Ordinary play spaces such as backyards, ovals, mud and fallen trees also offer unique experiences and contribute treasured memories.

If your child's play space is small or you do not have a backyard, think of creative ways for your child to be active. For example, set up play items in different ways or introduce new play items at regular intervals and mix them with favourite items. It is also important to include parks or other local outdoor areas whenever possible.

Make a habit of 'prompting' your child to try different ways of moving, to help improve their skills and confidence. You can 'prompt' children to change:

- *How* their body can move ('How fast can you...?')
- *Where* their body can move ('Can you do that sideways?')
- *What* their body can do ('Can you do this with one leg?')
- *Who* they can move with ('Can you both do that together?')

Planning for positive active play experiences

Planning for regular active play does not require travelling far or spending a lot of money on activities or play items. Your child can still get the most out of being active when given low-cost play items, and through a creative use of local play spaces.

Encourage your child to set up their own play area and select what they will play with from a range of simple, active play items. Some children can be active for hours with the one play item, while others need ideas to stay engaged. The pace of activity can range from light actions (such as building or playing on the floor) through to vigorous actions (such as running or jumping). Knowing when to prompt for more movement comes from watching your child play.

