

Move and Play Every Day

National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years

These recommendations are for children who haven't started school yet. If your child has started school, please refer to the National Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds.

Children love to play and be active!

Being physically active every day is important for the healthy growth and development of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Physical activity for children includes both structured activities and unstructured free play, and can be done indoors or out.

The benefits for your child

Being physically active every day is fun and can:

- Help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Build strong bones and muscles.
- Improve balance, movement and co-ordination skills.
- Promote social skills through interactions with people.
- Support brain development.
- Encourage self-confidence and independence.

Whatever their level of ability, children need to be active.

The National Physical Activity Recommendations provide you with support and guidance in relation to your child's physical activity, play, sedentary behaviour (sitting) and television viewing. While meeting these recommendations may seem like a challenge at times, tips and ideas have been provided to help you include more activity in your child's day.

What physical activity does my infant need?

Recommendation

Infants (Birth to 1 year)

For healthy development in infants, physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments – should be encouraged from birth.

Before infants begin to crawl, physical activity includes reaching and grasping, pulling and pushing, moving their head, body and limbs during daily routines, and supervised floor play, including tummy time.

Once your infant is mobile, encourage them to be as active as possible in a safe, supervised and nurturing play environment.

TIPS AND IDEAS

Infants (Birth to 1 year)

- Encourage them to reach and grasp by placing toys just out of reach.
- Play push and pull games with balls and soft toys.
- Play music to encourage playful movements.
- Encourage movement and play during bath time.

How much physical activity does my toddler or pre-schooler need?

Recommendation

Toddlers (1 to 3 years) &
Pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years)

Toddlers and pre-schoolers should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.

You'd be surprised by how many opportunities there are throughout the day for toddlers and pre-schoolers to be active. Remember that kids don't need to do their three hours of physical activity all at once. It can be accumulated throughout the day and can include light activity like standing up, moving around and playing.

TIPS AND IDEAS

Toddlers (1 to 3 years) & Pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years)

- Play with different sized balls.
- Twirl and run with streamers.
- Play with balloons – punch, kick or throw them to keep them off the ground.
- Blow bubbles and chase them through the air.
- Play games – try hide-and-seek, obstacle courses, follow the leader, stuck in the mud, or tip/tag games.
- Move to music or try action songs like 'Ring-A-Ring-A-Rosie' or 'Head-Shoulders-Knees and Toes'.
- Walk barefoot on different surfaces – try grass, carpet, concrete or sand.
- Pretend to move like different animals.

- Play dress ups and act out different roles.
- Walk to places rather than driving or using the stroller.

With so many opportunities to be active, your child can reach three hours before you know it!

Tips for active play!

- Choose 'active' toys. For infants, choose boxes, pots, pans, streamers, hoops and toys that encourage reaching, stretching, crawling and moving. Play materials don't need to be expensive and can be found around the house.
- For toddlers and pre-schoolers, choose toys and play materials that encourage movement and help develop skills like running, kicking, throwing and catching, such as balls, bats, tricycles and kites.
- When you can, involve all of the family – try walking to the park, a visit to the zoo for a special treat, or playing soccer in the backyard.
- Being outdoors is best – just make sure kids have sun protection, such as sunscreen, hats and shade. If the weather is no good, head indoors and build cubby houses or play hide and seek.
- Encourage children to be independent and to explore the world around them. Allow them the freedom to create, imagine and direct their own play, while maintaining a safe environment. This will help your child's confidence grow!
- Competitive sport is not recommended for children under 5 years. Some great alternatives include structured activities like water familiarisation, recreational

gymnastics and dance taught by qualified instructors.

Active play is the best way for kids to be physically active.

For more tips, visit www.healthyactive.gov.au

What about TV and computer games?

TV, DVDs and computer games may be popular with kids (and some adults too!), but they usually involve sitting for long periods – time which could be spent playing active games or interacting with others. Your child will benefit more from talking, singing, reading, listening to music and playing with you, a family member or a friend, than they will from watching TV.

Regardless of how active kids may be at other times, it is still important to limit screen time.

Recommendations

Children aged 2 to 5 years

For children 2 to 5 years of age, sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.

Children aged less than 2 years

Children younger than 2 years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).

A variety of TV programs have been created for children under 2 years, and the temptation to let children watch these programs is understandable, however this is discouraged. TV

watching has been associated with delays in language and cognitive development, and also attentional problems during childhood. While the educational benefit of TV for children under 2 is questionable, the benefits of interactions between children and their parents are undeniable.

TIPS AND IDEAS

Reducing screen time for all children

- Make meal time your family time and turn off the TV.
- Turn the TV off after the program has finished.
- Set limits and have rules around screen time.
- Make your kids' bedrooms TV and computer free.
- Play music or stories on CDs instead.

What about time spent sitting or being inactive?

Recommendation

All children (Birth to 5 years)

Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary, restrained, or kept inactive, for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.

'Sedentary behaviour' refers to time spent being physically inactive. All children need some 'down time' but they are not naturally inactive for long periods of time.

Sitting in strollers, highchairs and car seats (being restrained) for long periods isn't good for children's health and development and goes against their natural tendency to be active and play.

The use of baby jumpers and baby walkers is also discouraged. The evidence shows they can restrict the muscle development required for independent walking and may cause injuries.

TIPS AND IDEAS

All children

- Take breaks on long car trips – stop at a park or rest area.
- Give kids a break from the stroller and let them walk for some of the journey.
- Try walking, pedalling or using a scooter for short trips.

What can I do?

Get involved! Remember you are the most important role model in your child's life. By being active with your child you can encourage their lifelong enjoyment of physical activity – and benefit your own health at the same time.

Don't forget that along with lots of play and activity, kids need a variety of good foods for healthy growth and development. For more information on healthy eating for kids see the nutrition resources outlined below.

Healthy living resources for all ages

- Get Up & Grow – Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood (for centre based care, family day care and pre-schools)
- Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds
- Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 12-18 year olds
- National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults

- Choose Health: Be Active – a physical activity guide for older Australians
- Food for Health – Dietary Guidelines for Australians (Adults, Children and Adolescents)
- Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

To order resources, free of charge phone 1800 020 103.

For more information visit:

www.healthyactive.gov.au