



Family Information

Physical Activities

Recommended Guidelines

Physical Activity and Children

Everyone knows that exercise and physical activities are important for a healthy lifestyle, but a new emphasis is now being placed on physical fitness during the early childhood years. It is estimated that children are watching approximately three hours of television daily with an additional two and one-half hours spent on other media such as computers and video games. Health issues that were once considered adult only, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, are now becoming prevalent in younger ages. Experts agree that this is due to the lethal combination of poor diet, both nutritionally and portion sizes, and inactivity. To combat physical inactivity, parents need to limit any activity that may be considered 'sedentary,' such as watching television, playing video games, or working on the computer. Children should also have a variety of physical activities that they find fun, whether it be jumping rope, playing relay games, swinging or sliding on equipment, roller skating or blading, or participating in group sports. However, research shows that the most effective way to encourage physical activities in children is to have parents who are physically active themselves. When children are reared in a home that values a healthy lifestyle, they are more



likely to be fit and active as well as continue a healthy lifestyle in the future.

Encouraging Fitness

At one time, people believed physical ability was somehow innate, that you were either born a couch potato or an athlete. New findings show that there are basic motor skills that need to be taught and developed in order for young children to grow into physically fit adults. These eight skills; jumping, traveling, balancing, catching, throwing, kicking, striking with body part(s), and striking with equipment, begin in infancy and continue throughout adolescence. With more exposure and practice, these skills becoming more refined and advanced over time. A child who never has the opportunity to build on one or more of these skills will appear to be less capable or inept, and because of this, will tend to shy away from engaging in these types of activities. The key point to remember is: children, like adults, gravitate towards activities in which they feel confident and give them a sense of pride and accomplishment. When children feel awkward or unhappy with their performance, they rarely become self-motivated to continue. It is then up to the parent to help develop these skills, just as you would assist them in learning to tie their shoes, writing their name, or saying 'thank

you.' This occurs when parents have a positive attitude, patience, and physically active lifestyles themselves. Remember, the skills you are encouraging now will continue into the adult years, allowing your child the opportunity for a long and healthy life.

How much is enough?

Here are the recommendations for children from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education

Age	Minimum Daily	Comments
Infant	no specific requirements	physical activity should encourage motor development
Toddler	1 1/2 hours	30 minutes planned physical activity & 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
Pre Schooler	2 hours	60 minutes planned physical activity & 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
School Age	1 hour or more	Break up into intervals of 15 minutes or more

Want more information on exercise guidelines?

Try these websites:

www.kidshealth.org www.drgreene.com
www.healthinschools.org www.americanheart.org