

Physical Activity

A Child's Playmate For Life

A physical activity guide for parents and caregivers of toddlers and preschoolers



The Benefits of Physical Activity

Physical activity is important for healthy growth and development of toddlers and preschoolers. Sixty-seven per cent of Canadian children are not active enough for optimal growth and development. In addition, one third of boys and one quarter of girls are overweight or obese. (Ontario Medical Association, 2005).

When children are encouraged to be active at an early age, they have a greater possibility to continue being active throughout their lifespan.

Regular physical activity:

- helps develop strong bones and encourages muscle growth,
- increases flexibility,
- makes the heart and lungs stronger,
- helps improve sleeping habits,
- helps improve eating habits,
- increases self-esteem,
- reduces stress,
- helps increase concentration, memory, creativity, problem-solving skills and enhances learning, and
- develops positive lifelong attitudes toward physical activity.

Remember :
an active child
is more likely to
become an
active adult.



Be Involved

Actions speak louder than words. Show your child that you value physical activity by joining in. It makes activities more fun and has a positive effect on your relationship. When you participate, your child's participation rate increases.

- Walk together on short trips instead of driving
- Play in the park together
- Build a snowman together
- Play hide and seek
- Have your child join you while you are doing chores like raking leaves or shovelling the driveway

**Physically
active parents
have physically
active children!**



Choosing the Right Activities for Toddlers (ages 2-3)

Accumulate at least 30 minutes of daily structured physical activity a day and 60 minutes or more of unstructured play.

Crawling and Climbing:

Create an area where your child can safely crawl and climb on, off, over, under and through a play structure or household furniture.

Walking and Running:

Walk forward and backward, up and down stairs, along a low bench or balance beam with help. Children can run, but they may occasionally lose their balance and fall forward (remember, safety first).

Jumping and Landing:

Jump over lines marked on the floor with masking tape. Jump with alternate feet, straight legs and a stiff body. Encourage toddlers to land with ankles flexed, knees bent, and arms outstretched for balance.

Jack-in-the-Box:

Crouch down and jump up suddenly, reaching as high as possible. Come back to the crouching position.

Dancing:

Pick songs with different rhythms and move your bodies to the beat together.



Choosing the Right Activities for Preschoolers (ages 3-5)

Accumulate at least 60 minutes of daily structured physical activity a day and 60 minutes or more of unstructured play.

Obstacle Course:

Make an obstacle course with boxes, large plastic bottles filled with sand or water, ropes, laundry basket, hoops, tables, and boards.

Hitting and Batting:

Hang a ball in a mesh bag at the child's shoulder level. Encourage the child to hit the ball with their right hand, left hand, and then both hands. Try hitting the ball with different household objects. Have even more fun hitting a piñata!

Kicking:

Have your child kick a large ball, run forward, stop it from rolling with their hands, and kick it again. You can pass the ball with the child, hit a target 1 to 3 metres away or kick a ball in the air.



Television

Ontarians ages 2 and up spend almost 21 hours a week watching TV, not including computer and video games. Limiting the use of TV, video games, and computer to a total of one hour a day is a good start. Children have excellent imaginations and can come up with many ideas for play. If children are going to be watching TV encourage stimulating programs that promote active living.

Be Active

Provide children with opportunities to be physically active.

- Start with small changes.
- Allow time for free play.
- Keep activities fun.
- Emphasize fun over competition.
- Encourage interaction and active play with other children.
- Keep track of daily physical activity to see how your child is doing.

Be Positive

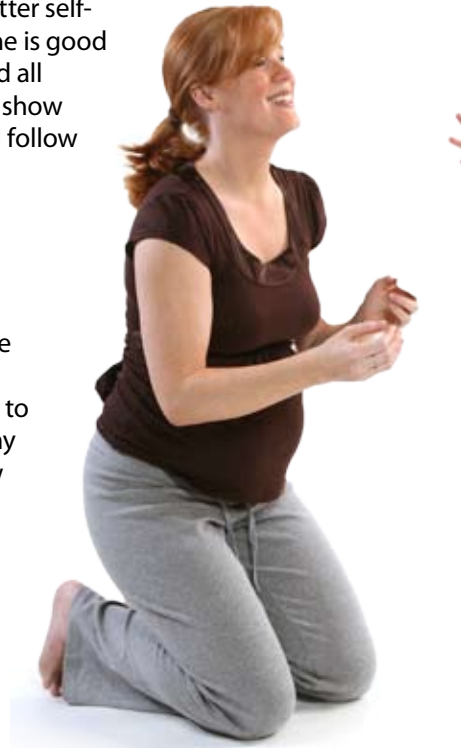
Children copy what they see and hear. Remember that we are all different shapes and sizes and have different skill levels. Your child will be more confident and have better self-esteem if you are positive and focus on what he is good at. Encourage her to try new things and reward all efforts with praise. Be a role model, when you show confidence in your own abilities your child will follow in your footsteps.

Be Safe

Safety is a concern for children of all ages.

Here are some hints to stay safe and have fun.

- Make sure toddlers and young children are under constant adult supervision.
- Children love to copy adults; they also like to understand rules. Explain to your child why you have safety rules and show them how you follow safety rules.
- Wear safe and comfortable clothing.
- Continuously scan for a changing and potentially unsafe environment. Remove hazardous objects from play areas.



Time to Play!

Children change from month to month. They quickly develop different motor skills and thinking skills between the ages of 2 to 5. Therefore, it is very important to match the activity to your child's abilities. If the task is too hard children become frustrated. The best time to start an activity is when your child is alert. Children get bored quickly so finishing an activity before trying the next is not necessary. Children enjoy the process of playing and do not need a beginning and an end to an activity.

What to Aim For

Movement and activity come naturally to children. Parents and caregivers are aware that between the ages of 2 and 5 children are active, but are they active enough? Toddlers need a minimum of 30 minutes of daily structured physical activity, and preschoolers need a minimum of 60 minutes of daily structured physical activity.



References

Dietitians Of Canada
Ontario Medical Association
Canadian Institute of Child Health
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
Canadian Child Care Federation, spring 2000
Statistics Canada, 2003
2004 Chief Medical Officer of Health Report, Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives

Get Involved in the Community

To find a play group near you or for further information contact:

KFL&A Public Health Child & BabyTalk

613-549-1154 or 1-800-267-7875, ext. 555

www.kflapublichealth.ca

Better Beginnings for Kingston Children

613-542-2835

www.kcha.ca

Kingston Military Family Resource Centre

613-541-5010, ext. 5195

www.kmfrc.com

Ontario Early Years Centre–Kingston & The Islands

613-384-1231

www.ontarioearlyyears.ca

Ontario Early Years Centre–The Child Centre–Sharbot Lake

613-279-2244

www.ontarioearlyyears.ca

Ontario Early Years Centre–Lennox & Addington (LARC)–Napanee

613-354-6318

www.larc4kids.com

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.publichealth.gc.ca

Caring for Kids

www.caringforkids.cps.ca

Dietitians of Canada

www.Dietitians.ca/healthystart/index.asp

Mothers in Motion

www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion



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