

Kids & getting active!



Regular physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Making physical activity a priority and encouraging good habits in children from an early age is important and can help them to develop the skills they need to continue being active throughout their lives.

Why is being physically active important for children?

Children between the age of five and 12 years of age greatly benefit from being physically active. It can:

- promote healthy growth and development
- build strong bones and muscles
- improve balance and develop skills
- maintain and develop flexibility
- help achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- improve cardiovascular fitness
- help relaxation
- improve posture
- provide opportunities to make friends
- improve self-esteem

(Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds)

Children who are not physically active enough won't have the chance to get these benefits and are at increased risk of becoming overweight or obese. This makes it harder for them to be active and keep up with others, either in sport or in play. They are also more likely to be prone to conditions such as Asthma, flat feet and joint sprains due to excessive weight.

Long term, being overweight or obese can contribute to conditions such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, Type II Diabetes and liver disease. Recent research has shown that warning signs for these conditions can be present in overweight teenagers as young as fifteen.

more overleaf...

for more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity go to www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au



How much activity do children need?

Children should participate in at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of physical activity, including activity that makes them 'huff and puff', each day. To help your children achieve this, they need opportunities to be active at school, after school and on weekends.

This activity doesn't all have to be done at once. It can be built up throughout the day by walking or riding to and from school, participating in more activities at school, active play at home or organised sport after school and on weekends.

As well as being active, it is important to remember to limit the amount of time that children spend watching 'small screens' such as televisions, playing on the internet or computer games to no more than two hours a day.

Remember

- Children should wear hats, appropriate footwear and 30+ sunscreen when being active outdoors.
- Encourage children to drink plenty of water when they being active or playing sports.
- Balance out an active lifestyle for your child with a healthy diet – remembering to limit foods that are high in saturated fat, sugar and/or salt.

What can I do to help my children be active?

Be an active role model and have a positive attitude to being active. If your children see you enjoying physical activity and having fun it can encourage them to participate.

Encourage active play in the backyard, going for a fast walk, dancing to music, riding a bike or more vigorous activities like running, swimming, playing sports like soccer, netball or basketball.

Make time to be active as a family – walk with your children to a local park, go bike riding or walk the dog.

Help your kids 'play active' by buying gifts that encourage physical activity such as balls, bats, skipping ropes and other equipment. This will be a fun way to help your children develop and practice their skills.

Park further away from your destination (whether its school, sport or the shops) and walk the rest of the way.

Make sure your children have the opportunity to be active after school – either through active play or organised sport. Talk to your child about what activities they prefer to do.

Keep it interesting. If you can, let your child try a variety of activities so that they can find one or more that they enjoy and want to continue with.

Start slowly and build up the amount of activity your children do over time, particularly if they are not currently active.

Limit the amount of time your children are allowed to spend watching television, surfing the internet and playing on the computer and encourage active alternatives.

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