

Parenting Matters

Spring 2008

Show Them The Moves: Get Your Children Active For Life

Children always seem to be on the move. They're wiggling, crawling, jumping, running, hopping, or skipping. It's hard to believe that even with all their moving and playing, many children do not get enough physical activity.

The Institute of Medicine says that over the past 30 years, the number of overweight preschool children, ages 2 to 5, has more than doubled, and for children 6 to 11 years, that number has tripled. Nine million children over age 6 are obese or overweight. Children's obesity is now a major national medical concern.

There can be many reasons for children being overweight. The two biggest reasons are "what they are eating" and "what they are doing." Not being active enough is one reason young children are overweight. So, how much physical activity do children really need?
How Much Movement Do Children Need?

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education has guidelines for children to be at their best fitness level. There are guidelines for infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children as to how much physical activity is best for their health and development.

How Much Activity for Infants?

You may wonder, what kinds of physical activities do babies need? Every kind of activity with babies is important to their overall development. Every movement encourages brain activity, which, in turn, plays a part in cognitive, emotional, and social development.

For example, babies or toddlers who spend too much time in strollers, play pens, car seats, or other confined spaces, are not having the opportunities they need to explore, learn, and develop. Too much time spent not moving



as a baby or toddler can lead to the habit of not being physically active.

At this age, infants need to be rolling over, crawling, walking, pulling themselves up, exploring their surroundings, interacting with parents and others. Remember activity just means doing something, not lying down or being still.

It is recommended that every day, infants should:

- Spend time with a caregiver (parent, grandparent, child care provider) who will provide activities that involve some movement. This includes holding, rocking, and carrying the baby around.
- Be taken to new environments, such as being able to explore different rooms, go outside, be taken on a stroll, and see what other children or people are doing.
- Be able to move as much as possible. Spend as little time as needed in a car seat, stroller, play pen, or anything else that stops them from being able to stretch their legs, kick, roll over, and so on.

Continued from page 1

How Much Activity for Toddlers/Preschoolers?

Toddlers and preschoolers are already active, right? They run, jump, throw, and kick. This is true, but, they have to have the chance to do all this. These skills develop because they are given time and opportunity. Too many children are not getting enough time to be physically active in child care and in school. The younger children usually want to be active - getting them to be active is usually not a problem.

It is recommended that every day, toddlers and preschoolers should:

- Have structured or planned physical activity - for toddlers, at least 30 minutes; for preschoolers, at least one hour. Of course, more is better. And it doesn't have to be continuous. It could be throughout the day, but as long as it adds up to 30 minutes or an hour, it's okay.
- Be engaged in some sort of movement or physical activity, structured or on their own, throughout the day. Except when they are sleeping, no more than 60 minutes at a time should go by without them being active.
- Have both indoor and outdoor time to move around and use their large muscles. This includes kicking and throwing a ball, climbing on playground equipment, riding a bicycle, skipping and jumping.

It is important to note that children in child care need to be in settings where the child care program plans enough appropriate physical activity throughout the day. Parents should ask about what kinds of daily physical activities are planned when looking for child care.

How Much Activity for Young School-Age?

School-age children need even more physical activity than toddlers and preschoolers. As their bodies are growing, they need more food, more energy, and more activity. Physical activity should be a part of their ordinary, everyday activities. Whether activities are structured such as gym class, or unstructured, such as raking leaves, it's all a part of what these young school-age children need to be healthy and fit. Although there is a structured physical education program in every school system, it isn't enough. Some schools only have physical education classes twice

a week. Playground time is usually limited to 15 or 20 minutes at a time.

It is recommended that every day, school-age children should:

- Get at least 30 minutes to one hour of physical activity, with 15 minutes of ongoing vigorous activity (gym class, recess, organized sport, or playing outside.)
- Get at least another additional hour of physical activity that is not structured and hopefully "fun," such as building towers, taking a hike, going on treasure hunt, or playing tag.
- Be encouraged to be active through whatever it takes to encourage them. Do lots of activities with them.

Adults and Children Active Together

Parents (and other primary caregivers in children's lives) are the most influential people in children's lives. Being active and staying active is a prime example of where as a parent you will greatly influence your child's fitness habits. When trying to make sure your child is getting enough activity, make sure you make it a family effort. Fitness is not just doing formal exercises, it's moving and stay moving for a period of time. We can all find something we like to do that involves movement, and that's the key to being active for a lifetime.

Make family time a regular part of your day or week, and include something physically active as part of it. Try these family fun activities to keep everyone moving:

- Go bowling
- Play volleyball, catch, kickball, tennis or whatever activity is fun for you and your family; take lessons together to learn a new sport
- Have water day in your backyard (when is the last time you ran through a sprinkler?)
- Walk around the mall, a carnival or park
- Take a nature hike
- Have hula hoop contests
- Learn a new dance and put on some music
- Take a ball outside and just play

You already know that as a parent, it is not easy to find time for beneficial physical activity in your own now very busy lives. But it has never been more important because your children need to see that you see it as important (but fun). The habits children start early in life will show up later in life. The more active a child is early in life, the more likely he will be active as an adult.



Being more active does take more planning, but stick with it and you'll find that your children are in better health, will learn to like at least once activity, and you may find that you enjoy it more than you thought.

INFANTS	TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS	YOUNG SCHOOL-AGERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold, rock ▪ Carry from place to place ▪ Play peek-a-boo ▪ Play pat-a-cake ▪ Take on walks ▪ Take to playground to watch other children ▪ Alternate positioning - place infant on stomach and back ▪ Take "Mommy and Me" exercise (yoga, swimming) or music classes at local recreation centers or places that offer activities for children and families ▪ Sing and dance with baby ▪ Provide safe space for exploration, crawling, pulling themselves up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Play music and move - march, hop, spin ▪ Play follow the leader ▪ Go to playground and supervise equipment play ▪ Run around at the park ▪ Take a walk at the mall ▪ Waterplay - run through the sprinklers ▪ Let them help you "clean up" - many preschoolers love to sweep, pick things up and put them in the trash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dance ▪ Bike rides/scooter rides ▪ Do chores around house or in yard (clean room, fold laundry, wash the car, sweep, water the yard, rake or pick up leaves, walk the dog) ▪ Hike, walk ▪ Play volleyball, soccer, swimming, gymnastics, martial arts, kickball ▪ Play outdoors or on playground with friends ▪ Throw frisbee, play with hula hoop, skate

For More Information

- The Institute of Medicine Childhood Obesity in the United States: Facts and Figures, Fact Sheet, September 2004.
- Kidshealth.org provides doctor-approved health information about children from before birth through adolescence. Get more ideas about how you can get your children (and yourself) active.
- Kidnetic.com is a resource for raising a healthy child and offers a special section just for parents. Get the facts about children and physical activity, healthy eating and self-esteem.
- American Academy of Pediatrics has a parenting corner with health topics of interest to parents of children of all ages. As an organization of 60,000 pediatricians, whether you're looking for general information related to child health or for more specific guidelines concerning a pediatric issue, this site will most likely have what you need

Source: NACCRRRA, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; The Daily Parent Volume 38, 2007.



Why Snacks?

Most kids like snacks. That's great! Think of snacks as mini-meals that help provide nutrients and food energy your child needs to grow, play, and learn.

Help your child snack smart. Your child has a small stomach. So he or she probably eats less at meals than you do. Smart snacks can help your child eat and drink enough during the day. In fact, most young children do best when they eat four to six times a day.

Keep food group snacks handy: for example, raw vegetables, fruit, juice, milk, cheese, yogurt, bread, peanut butter, and hard-cooked eggs.

Let snacks fill in the gaps. If your child misses juice for breakfast, offer fruit at snack time. Time snacks carefully – two to three hours before meals. That way your child will be hungry for lunch or supper.

Offer snacks to satisfy hunger. Skip the urge to offer a snack to quiet tears, calm your child, or reward behavior. That can lead to emotional overeating later on. Keep snacks small. If your child is still hungry, he or she can ask for more. Let your child decide what's enough.

Encourage tooth brushing after snacking – especially after eating bread, crackers, and sweet foods.

Snack wisely yourself! Do you snack when you feel stressed or bored – or just when you're hungry? What foods do you snack on? Remember, your child learns snack habits by watching you. Be a great role model!

Smart snacking is good for your whole family!

Quick snacks:

- Whole fruit, sliced into finger foods
- Berries
- Raw, cut-up vegetables
- Graham crackers
- String cheese
- Cheese and crackers
- Bagel and peanut butter
- Frozen yogurt

Easy-to-make snacks:

- Milk shake-ups: Pour milk, juice, and ice in a covered container. Shake!
- Fruit juice pops: Freeze fruit juice in small paper cups or ice cube trays.
- Crunchy banana: Peel bananas. Roll them in peanut butter or yogurt, and crushed cereal. Freeze!
- Peanut butter logs: Fill celery with peanut butter.
- Cinnamon toast: Toast whole wheat bread. Spread a little margarine or butter on top. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar.

Your child's favorite food-group snacks:

Offer milk or juice with snacks.

FREE EARLY LEARNING FOR ALL FOUR YEAR OLDS

Georgia's Pre-K classrooms provide our four year olds with free learning experiences they need to prepare for kindergarten. Studies have shown that children who enter kindergarten ready to learn are more likely to succeed in school. Georgia Pre-K successfully prepares children for school by offering an opportunity for them to develop school readiness skills in classrooms that encourage them to have fun while learning.

REQUIREMENTS

Each child must turn four-years-old by September 1 and be a Georgia resident. Proof of age must be on file on your child's first day of school. Parents do not have to be legal residents of the United States.

Proof of age - Birth certificate, passport, green card, pink card, or Federal I-94.
Immunization forms and Medicaid care are NOT accepted.

Proof of residency - Lease, driver's license, letter from shelter or employer, and any utility bill
EXCEPT a telephone or cellular phone bill.

WHEN SHOULD I START ENROLLING MY CHILD?

Each site can set their own registration dates, so check with the providers in your community.
The best time to start asking is between March and May.

HOW DO I FIND A GEORGIA PRE-K PROGRAM?

Contact Quality Care for Children to help you find a program that is close to your home or job. You may also use our Online Child Care Search at www.qualitycareforchildren.org.
A Pre-K program may be in a child care center or public school.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO REGISTER?

Pre-K providers cannot charge a registration fee for the 6.5 hours of the instructional day.
There may be additional costs for afterschool care and transportation (if offered).

WHO IS IN CHARGE OF PRE-K?

Georgia Pre-K is a program of the state department that is in charge of licensing and the child care food program - Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.
www.decal.state.ga.us





50 Executive Park South
Suite 5015
Atlanta, GA 30329



QUALITY CARE
for CHILDREN

Need Child Care?

We offer FREE child care referrals.

Go to www.qualitycareforchildren.org
or call one of our three locations.

Metro Atlanta
404-479-4240
877-722-2445

NW Georgia
770-387-0828
800-308-1825

Central Georgia
478-752-7800
800-558-4804

