

Making Physical Activity a Way of Life: AAP Policy Explained

Parents, would you answer “true” or “false” to these statements?

- My children and I are physically active enough to break a sweat every day.
- My children probably will be physically active as adults.
- I will be physically active when I am a grandparent.



If you mostly answered “true,” you are teaching your child about lifelong physical literacy. A physically literate person *can* and *wants* to be physically active as a child and as an adult.

How much physical activity do kids need each day?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends (<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-3992>) that infants, children, teens, and children with special needs have time for physical activity each day. Here’s how much they need:

- Infants need at least 30 minutes of “tummy time” and other interactive play, spread throughout each day.
- Kids aged 3-5 need at least 3 hours of physical activity per day, or about 15 minutes every hour they are awake.
- Kids 6 years and older need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most days of the week.

Luckily, there are lots of opportunities and choices in how kids can stay active. Here are a few ideas:

Physical Activities by Age

Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers	Elementary students	Middle schoolers	Teenagers
Tummy time while awake.	Neighborhood walks or free play outside.	Tumbling, throwing, & catching.	Free play and organized sports focused on fun.	Activities that encourage socialization. Avoid specializing in one sport.	Activities that encourage socialization and competition, when appropriate.
30+ minutes throughout day.	3+ hours throughout day.	3+ hours a day, including 1 hour of moderate to vigorous activity.	60+ minutes of activity most days. Muscle/bone strengthening activities 3 days a week.	60+ minutes of activity most days. Muscle/bone strengthening 3 days a week.	60+ minutes of activity most days. Muscle/bone strengthening 3 days a week.

Benefits of physical activity

Most kids don't move enough. Just 25% get a healthy amount. Many parents are not active, either. That's why it's so important to make time for moderate to vigorous activity on most days. Here are just some of the benefits:

- Helps prevent obesity, heart disease, and diabetes
- Helps students focus in school
- For teens, helps avoid risk-taking behaviors like smoking, drinking, and using drugs
- Improves sleep
- Burns calories
- Strengthens the cardiovascular system
- Builds strong bones and muscles
- Increases flexibility
- Diffuses stress
- Teaches teamwork and sportsmanship
- Boosts self-esteem
- Improves an overall sense of well-being

When kids resist

Some kids can't wait to get home from school, stake out a place on the couch, and spend the rest of the day watching TV or playing video games. Physical activity is just not on their radar. Turning exercise into a lifelong habit might take some creativity and time.

If your child resists being physically active, try giving choices and encouraging new things. See if they are willing to try a new activity with a friend. Find out what your child wants to do and do it together or find activities that the whole family can do. Let your inner child out!

The best medicine

The AAP urges families to make lifelong physical activity a goal. It's the best medicine parents can give their kids for a lifetime of health.

More information:

- [Are Your Children Getting Enough Physical Activity? \(/English/healthy-living/fitness/StopWatch-Tool/Pages/default.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/fitness/StopWatch-Tool/Pages/default.aspx)
- [11 Ways to Encourage Your Child to Be Physically Active \(/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Encouraging-Your-Child-to-be-Physically-Active.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Encouraging-Your-Child-to-be-Physically-Active.aspx)
- [Energy Out: Daily Physical Activity Recommendations \(/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Energy-Out-Daily-Physical-Activity-Recommendations.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Energy-Out-Daily-Physical-Activity-Recommendations.aspx)
- [How Teens Can Stay Fit \(/English/ages-stages/teen/fitness/Pages/How-Teens-Can-Stay-Fit.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/teen/fitness/Pages/How-Teens-Can-Stay-Fit.aspx)

Last Updated 8/5/2020

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