

Just for Preschoolers and their families

**PEER
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Fact Sheet

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Active Kids are Healthy Kids

How Much Activity is Enough? 60-60-60!

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WHAT DO CHILDREN GAIN FROM BEING MORE ACTIVE?

Just like for adults, increased physical activity has been linked to better overall health and reduced risk of chronic disease in children. But there are a few more key advantages for children being physically active including:

- Better sleep
- Better academic performance
- Improved ability to handle physical and emotional challenges
- Improved brain development, function and creativity
- May even improve health conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder¹

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

It can be confusing trying to figure out which guidelines to follow⁽²⁻⁷⁾. Your safest bet and easiest way to remember is “60-60-60” since the most comprehensive guidelines recommend 120 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day (60 minutes of structured and 60 minutes of unstructured) and sedentary time no longer than 60 minutes at a time (see Sedentary Behavior). Providing 120 minutes of activity, however, doesn’t simply mean increasing recess or outdoor play time as this does not necessarily increase physical activity for every child. For already active children, more playground time can mean more active play. But for some children who typically choose to engage in more sedentary options they may just be sedentary longer.

CHILD CARE VS. HOME A common problem with ensuring children get enough physical activity is that they are in the care of both parents and providers. If a child is in a child care facility, one must not assume the teacher is meeting the total physical activity minutes for the day. On the other hand, teachers also cannot assume the child is achieving his/her physical activity goals at home. So it is important to have open communication between both the provider and the caregiver about the child’s daily physical activity routine. Parents should also reinforce fundamental movement skills children learn in the classroom and provide additional opportunities at home. Visit the Healthy Kids Resource Center and search “Physical Activities to do with your children.”

60-60-60

- 60 mins** of STRUCTURED activity daily
- 60 mins** and up to several hours of free play or UNSTRUCTURED activity daily!
- 60 mins** of sitting is long enough! GET UP after 60 minutes or less and move!

Contrary to popular belief, studies show that children in child care programs are generally NOT active! So what does this mean for parents? Continuous at-home involvement is the key!



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120 MINUTES WELL SPENT!

While 120 minutes seems like a long time, it can be broken up into shorter bouts of activity. Some of that activity (60 minutes) should be spent doing structured bouts of activity, meaning “adult-led” physical activities with an intended goal or outcome. The other 60 minutes (or more) may be unstructured or “active free-play”. Finally, children should not be sedentary for longer than 60 minutes at any given time. Be sure to get children up periodically and get them moving throughout the day!

STRUCTURED PLAY

Structured play is an organized or “guided” activity, with intentional goals or objectives that give children opportunities to practice key fundamental movement skills such as those found in state or local Pre-K standards. These activities can also teach children their colors, numbers or letters.

Examples Include:

- **Hopscotch** – uses numbers to teach a child to hop on one foot;
- **Red Light, Green Light** – uses colors to teach a child to step forward and backward;
- **Dance** – uses various musical genres and lyrical messaging to teach a child simple dance patterns;
- **Sports Drills** – teaches physical motor skills such as dribbling, throwing or catching a ball



Join In!

Teachers and parents need to be involved!

*If children see adults do it, they want to do it.
If children see adults uninterested, they are likely to also be uninterested.*

UNSTRUCTURED PLAY



Unstructured play is free time playing on the school playground, at the park, or with the neighborhood friends in a guided and safe environment. Sometimes this means providing sports equipment, playground equipment, stencils on the ground or other child appropriate props for them to choose from. The child is free to do whatever kind of physical activity he/she

chooses. Unstructured play helps children develop their sense of independence and social interaction. Encourage your child to play outdoors as much as possible, whether at a playground, park, or on nature walk.



WHAT IS MODERATE-TO-VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

What does the recommendation of “moderate-to-vigorous physical activity” mean? “Moderate-to-vigorous” refers to large body movement activities that significantly increase breathing and use arms and/or legs (not just hands).



Moderate Physical Activity

- Brisk walking
- Playing on outdoor play equipment, moving about, swinging, climbing, or tumbling
- Playing hopscotch, 4-square, kickball, or ball games, bicycling, swimming.

Vigorous Physical Activity

- Running, hopping, galloping, hiking or walking quickly up a hill
- Playing, running, or jumping games
- Playing tag or playing chase
- Doing jumping jacks
- Dancing or skipping to music
- Playing sports such as soccer or basketball

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