



Fit Kids are Healthy Kids

The Elements of Fitness

By Lindsay, Anne and Byington, Teresa

Playing and being physically active are very important for children's health. Children should engage in indoor and outdoor active play in their preschool and at home. Besides enjoying the health benefits of regular activity, preschoolers who are physically fit have stronger muscles and bones, are less likely to become overweight and have a lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular diseases.



Stretching activities help maintain **FLEXIBILITY** by allowing muscles and joints to bend and move easily through their full range of motion. Although most preschoolers are already flexible, learning to maintain healthy muscles is important. Children can begin to lose their flexibility during adolescence if they are not active. Look for opportunities every day to reach and stretch by trying to get a toy just out of reach, practicing a split, or doing a cartwheel.



CARDIO endurance is developed when children engage in short bursts of aerobic activity. During aerobic activity, the heart beats faster and a child breathes harder. Short bursts of activity such as running, jumping, swimming and riding a bike or tricycle help to strengthen the preschooler's heart.

Improving **MUSCLE & BONE STRENGTH** doesn't mean lifting weights. Young children build strength best by lifting their own body weight and doing weight bearing exercises (carry their weight). Playing hopscotch, doing handstands, swinging on monkey bars, climbing, wrestling, and jumping are great examples of activities that help tone and strengthen muscles.

3 Elements of Fitness

If you've ever watched children on a playground, you've seen the three elements of fitness in action when they:

1. Run around playing tag (*cardio*)
2. Play hopscotch (*muscle & bone strength*)
3. Climb a ladder (*flexibility*)



REFERENCES

2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Scientific Report for youth: Ch.7" Department of Human and Health Services, 2018, [health.gov/our-work/physical-activity/current-guidelines/scientific-report](https://www.health.gov/our-work/physical-activity/current-guidelines/scientific-report).



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