



HEART SMART

Cardio Endurance

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Physical activity is essential to helping children maintain a healthy weight by utilizing energy and strengthening their heart, muscles and bones. It also improves their overall health, helps them sleep and handle physical and emotional challenges better. Regular physical activity can help children improve academically as well.

Cardio- Respiratory, or “Cardio” Endurance is an important element to children’s physical fitness. Although we don’t generally measure cardio endurance in young children, providing opportunities to engage in moderate to vigorous activity will improve a child’s cardiovascular fitness. Higher amounts of physical activity are associated with better health outcomes in young children especially for bone health and reduced risk of excessive body fat. In children and adolescents, physical activity is also associated with cardio metabolic health such as lower risk for heart disease and diabetes.



Use the Whole Body to Be Heart Smart

Cardio activities are generally associated with heavy breathing and sweating and therefore considered moderate-to-vigorous. Preschoolers should get at least 60-120 minutes of physical activity each day, most of which is moderate-to-vigorous intensity but should only be done in short bursts of activity.

Children under 6 years of age should never be required to run or perform other cardio activities for long periods of time. One way to increase the activity of the heart and lungs is to do large body movements. Big arm motions increase the heart and breathing rates which helps the body use more energy. The larger the movement, and the more body parts in motion, the more vigorous the activity.



Heart Smart Activity!

Teach children the value of cardio activities by showing them the “Heart Smart” activity. Have them place both hands over their heart and feel how fast the heart is beating. Ask if it’s beating fast or slow. Then perform a cardio activity such as jumping up and down for 20 seconds and practice the “heart smart” activity again. Notice how much faster the heart is beating. Explain that this means the heart and lungs are being active.





While doing cardio activities and living an active lifestyle help maintain a healthy weight, discussions centered on weight loss and decreased caloric intake should be avoided, especially with young children. Conversations such as these can cause depression and anxiety and may lead to disordered eating and body image disturbances.

Cardio physical activity should focus on being healthy and having fun!

Being Heart Smart Helps Maintain Energy Balance

Teach children that eating healthy foods gives our bodies energy so that we can be active longer. In the same way, when we are tired from physical activity, we need to put fuel, or healthy foods, back in our bodies to give us energy!

Do as I do... not as I say!

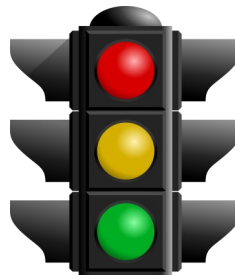
Be a good teacher or parent role model!

"We get energy from eating healthy foods and use it for physical activity"



There are many activities that improve children's cardio fitness while developing their motor skills. Try some of these at home:

- Tag
- Chase
- Red Light, Green Light with jumping and hopping commands
- Simon Says with large motions such as "touch the sky" commands
- Swimming
- Riding a bike or scooter
- Dancing



Cardio activities can also be done during non-designated physical activity times such as while waiting for the bus, during a TV commercial or walking from one place to another (hop like a kangaroo or another favorite animal).

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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