

Physical Activity and Children



What is Physical Activity?

Physical Activity can be anything that involves moving your body and using energy at an intensity that makes you warm and breathe a bit harder than usual. For children, that can mean playing games, riding their bike dance classes or swimming.

Why is Physical Activity important?

A child who is active will have stronger muscles and bones, be less likely to become overweight, decrease the risk of developing type II diabetes and lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. In addition, children who are physically active are likely to sleep better and are better able to handle physical and emotional challenges.

How much Physical Activity is enough?

Children and young people (5-18 years) should do 60 minutes of at least moderate activity each day. This should include weight bearing activities that put a bit more stress on the bones and joints and activities to improve muscle strength and flexibility. Parents should encourage their children to do a variety of activities to ensure that they cover all of these aspects.

Improving strength doesn't have to mean lifting weights. Children incorporate strength activities in their normal play by climbing, taking their bodyweight and swinging.

How do I start?

Physical activity can be fun for both adults and children. By finding activities that you can do as a family it becomes less like a chore and more of an enjoyable experience. Swimming, ice-skating and cycling are all good examples.

Consider how you can fit physical activity into your lifestyle and become a positive role model for your children. Walk or cycle to school instead of taking the car, consider the amount of time they spend watching television or playing computer games and encourage them to participate in after school activities. By understanding the importance of being physically active, you can instill fun and healthy habits that will last a lifetime.