

## Keep Your Child Active!

### Physical activity

- helps children build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- builds lean muscle
- helps decrease body fat
- helps prevent and reduce high blood pressure
- may enhance self-esteem and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety
- may increase a child's capacity for learning as it helps teach them about their world.

Many concerns have been raised about the increasing levels of obesity among children. While a variety of factors contribute to this effect, declining levels of physical activity likely exert a major influence.

### Your expectations and encouragement influence your child.

Do the children of active parents tend to be more active? Experts say that parents who are active themselves and who support and encourage their children to be active have a positive influence on their children's physical activity levels.

- Expect your child to be successful in sports or physical activities. Show your child you value their physical activity and your preschooler will be more likely to pursue this behavior.
- Promote physical activity for your children—both boys and girls.
- Be sure to encourage physical activity even if you think your child is not apparently gifted

regarding physical activity. Help your child find some movement to enjoy.

- Give your child practice time to build competence and a sense of mastery. Give your child many opportunities to gain a skill and increase confidence.

### Show the importance of physical activity by being involved.

- You show that physical activity is important when you are involved. Play catch, take a walk, push the swing, twirl with a hula hoop, go skating, or ride bikes together. Do it often!



### Make it easy to be to be physically active.

- Provide access to facilities, programs, and equipment to engage your child in physical activity. Go to parks and schools where you can access playground equipment. Be sure to check playground equipment for safety. Purchase equipment to have available to encourage physical activity. Look for used equipment to keep costs down. Again, check to see that the equipment is safe for use. Look for daily opportunities for your preschooler to be active.

## Take action for your child's physical activity:

- Promote daily physical activity (e.g., walking, running, riding a tricycle or bike, dancing, playing with a ball or at the playground, playing on equipment that requires balance, playing games such as "Simon Says").
- Encourage your preschooler to be independent (e.g., letting them climb up into the child safety seat). Let your child make choices about which activity to do. Involve your child in the decision-making by asking questions such as, "Do you want to ride your three-wheeler or play catch?"
- Play with your child before watching television. Gradually extend your active playtime and decrease television time.
- Include indoor activities with soft equipment that can be used in small spaces (e.g., playing tag or hide-and-seek, tossing a nerf ball, or crawling through an obstacle course).
- Reduce your child's fears of trying activities by providing an encouraging atmosphere which reduces fears of getting hurt and shows empathy.
- Use child care providers who promote physical activity and have the space and equipment for it.
- Provide appropriate safety equipment such as helmets when children participate in physical activity.
- Understand that children do not develop catching, throwing, and kicking skills by a specific age. However, if children have not attempted any of these activities by age 4, they may have difficulty keeping up with their peers.
- Match the activity to your child, not your child to the activity.

- Engage your child in developmentally appropriate organized activities such as tumbling, gymnastics, and dancing. Seek out qualified, experienced instructors.
- Children under 6 years old need time to develop their motor skills. For this reason, they are not ready for organized sports, which require visual acuity, control, and balance.
- Make it fun!

"We are what we repeatedly do."

— Aristotle

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