

Physical Activity for Children: Why?

For many years people simply assumed that young children were active. After all, young children are always running and jumping and climbing, aren't they?

Recent studies have shown, however, that about one-third of all Canadian children under the age of five are either overweight or obese (Healthy Kids Report Card, 2016). That is a frightening statistic! Being overweight can lead to many challenging results:

- o Increased risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes
- o Unwillingness (or inability) to live an active lifestyle
- o Unwillingness (or inability) to participate in sports or other activities in school and beyond
- o Potential target for bullying and risk for poor self esteem

So, how much should young children be moving? The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) provides guidelines for both physical activity and sedentary behaviour levels for children from birth to age 12.

Infants under 12 months: active several times with tummy time and interactive floor play. Limit sitting (high chair, strollers, car seats) to no more than 1 hour at a time. Screen time is not recommended.

Toddlers (1-2 years) and Preschoolers (3-4 years): At least 180 minutes each day spaced throughout the day - structured and unstructured play. Screen time should be limited to no more than 1 hour each day.

School Age (5-11 years): At least 60 minutes each day - structured and unstructured play. Screen time limited to no more than 2 hours each day. Encourage outdoor play every day.

Physical Literacy- What is it?

We hear and use two terms: physical activity and physical literacy, but how are they different?

Physical activity is movement using the body, that:

- o requires energy
- o increases heart rate
- o speeds breathing

Physical literacy is:

- o the motivation
- o the confidence
- o the competence to move for a lifetime! (Whitehead, 2010)

Young children need stimulating environments and opportunities to develop these skills through active play with toys, equipment, and in natural environments. Later, the motivation, confidence, and competence to move will allow children to participate in broader activities and sports.

Stability skills involve small or large body movements and motions that support balance. For infants, this begins with stretching their toes up to their mouths, holding their chest up off the floor, sitting without tipping over, balancing on their hands and knees, and standing with stability. For toddlers, stability skills involve balancing on one foot, walking on a straight line as best they can without stepping off, and being able to touch their knees or toes by bending at the waist. For preschoolers, stability skills typically include movements such as balancing for longer periods of time on one foot, walking on a circular line without stepping off, or walking forwards and backwards on a straight line.

Locomotor skills mean moving from one place to another and can take many forms. For infants, locomotor skills begin with rolling over, pushing their chests off the ground, crawling, standing, and eventually walking. For toddlers, these skills are being built when they are walking, running, climbing on playground equipment, and trying to jump (two feet) or hop (one foot). For preschoolers, locomotor skills are developed through running, jumping, hopping, skipping, climbing, swimming, sliding, gliding, and being able to move their bodies smoothly around other moving people or objects.

<https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/early-years-physical-literacy-plann>