

# Physical Activity and Early Childhood

## Building Lifelong Habits

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## Learning Objectives

- Build your capacity and confidence to positively impact physical activity and physical literacy levels of young children.
- Understand the importance of physical activity and physical literacy for young children.
- Learn about strategies which will increase the physical activity and physical literacy levels of young children.
- Participate in hands-on games and activities which can be incorporated into programming for young children.
- Work through common barriers which prevent physical activity in young children and identify solutions.



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## About the Best Start Resource Centre

- Provides information, consultations, resources and training in the areas of maternal health and early child development to service providers
- A program of Health Nexus ([www.healthnexus.ca](http://www.healthnexus.ca))
- Funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Have a Ball Together! project funded by the Lawson Foundation



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## Setting the Stage

- Series of multiple choice questions related to key terms, statistics and guidelines.
- Move in the way that reflects your response:
  - “A”: march on the spot
  - “B”: boxer arms
  - “C”: heel digs
  - “D”: overhead press



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## Setting the Stage

On average, out of a group of 26 kids aged 5 year olds, how many are meeting the guidelines for 60 minutes of moderate-vigorous physical activity each day?

- a. Less than 4
- b. Just over 7
- c. About 12
- d. Just over 15



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## Setting the Stage

What is an example of a moderate-intensity activity?

- a. Climbing
- b. Building with blocks
- c. Running
- d. Brisk walking



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## Setting the Stage

How many hours a day does the average 5 year old spend being sedentary (not including sleep time)?

- a. 3.4 hours
- b. 5.8 hours
- c. 7.6 hours
- d. 10 hours



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## Setting the Stage

What is the most influential environment for children to be physically active?

- a. Home
- b. School
- c. Community
- d. All of the above





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## Benefits of Physical Activity

Video: <https://vimeo.com/152604762>



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**BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN**



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### Physical Development

- Helps a child grow
- Builds and maintains a healthy heart, lungs, bones, muscles and joints
- Fosters the development of motor skills including fundamental movement skills
- Gives energy during the day
- Helps a child sleep better at night
- Enhances flexibility
- Develops good posture
- Improves coordination and balance
- Helps achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Improves fitness levels



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### Emotional Development

- Provides enjoyment and makes children feel happy
- Reduces anxiety and relieves stress
- Prevents, reduces, and helps manage depression
- Helps build confidence and positive self-esteem
- Improves the ability to deal with stress



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### **Social Development**

- Provides opportunities to practice and develop social skills
- Encourages interactions with others
- Helps develop friendships
- Encourages healthy family engagement
- Teaches life skills
- Promotes leadership skills
- Develops confidence
- Helps nurture imagination and creativity
- Promotes positive behaviour



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### Cognitive Development

- Enhances the development of brain function
- Improves problem-solving abilities
- Increases attention and concentration
- Improves memory
- Enhances creativity
- Increases readiness to learn
- Improves learning and academic performance



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### Physical Activity and Brain Development

- PA increases blood flow to the brain which increases alertness and mental focus
- PA builds new brain cells in the same region linked to memory
- Children who are active have a larger region of the brain responsible for maintaining attention
- PA reduces stress which can damage the brain
- PA that require coordination build connections between the left and right hemispheres of the brain



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

**active kids learn better**

physical activity at school is a win-win for students and teachers

ACTIVE LIVING RESEARCH

GRADES: **20%** more likely to earn an A in math or English

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES: increased **6%** over 3 years

JUST ONE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE LESSON CREATES:

**13%** increase in students' physical activity for the week

**21%** decrease in teachers' time managing behavior

**physically active kids have more active brains**

BRAIN SCANS OF STUDENTS TAKING A TEST:

after 20 minutes of sitting quietly

after 20 minutes of walking

Red areas are very active; blue areas are least active.

MORE RESULTS:

after 20 minutes of physical activity:  
students tested better in reading, spelling & math and were more likely to read above their grade level

after being in a physically active afterschool program for 9 months:  
memory tasks improved 16%

SOURCES: Donnelly J.E. and Lambourne K. (2011). Classroom-based physical activity, cognition, and academic achievement. Prev Med. 52(Suppl 1):S36-S42. Hillman C.H. et al. (2009). The effect of acute treadmill walking on cognitive control and academic achievement in preadolescent children. Neuroscience. 159(3):1044-1054. Kamijo K. et al. (2011). The effects of an afterschool physical activity program on working memory in preadolescent children. Dev Sci. 14(5):1046-1058. Kibbe D.L. et al. (2011). Ten years of TAKE 30: Integrating physical activity with academic concepts in elementary school classrooms. Prev Med. 52(Suppl 1):S43-S50. Nelson M.C. and Gordon-Larsen P. (2006). Physical activity and sedentary behavior patterns are associated with selected adolescent health risk behaviors. Pediatrics. 117(4): 1281-1290.

Learn more about why active kids learn better and how schools can help at [activelivingresearch.org/activeeducationbrief](http://activelivingresearch.org/activeeducationbrief).

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# Let's Get Active!

*Shake Your Sillies Out*



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### Role of Physical Literacy

- Important component of physical activity
- Includes motivation, confidence, competence and understanding
- Fundamental movement skills as building blocks:
  - Literacy = letters → words → sentences
  - Numeracy = numbers → fractions → equations
  - Physical literacy = movement skills → sequences → tasks



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## Benefits of Physical Activity

### Tips to help children develop physical literacy:

- Try new activities and movement skills.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for practice.
- Be active in different places (on the ground, in the air, in the water and on snow/ice).
- Choose activities that suit your children's skills and development.



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## Physical Activity for Infants

For babies aged 0-18 months, physical activity is all about exploration, experiencing simple movements and learning about the world.

### **Skills to develop:**

- 0-3 months: neck control, reaching, grabbing, arm and leg movements
- 4-6 months: rolling over, sitting, pushing with their legs
- 7-9 months: moving forward (crawling or scooting), moving objects between hands, standing
- 10-12 months: cruising (walking while holding onto furniture), playing with balls
- 12-18 months: walking up stairs, pushing and pulling objects while walking forward



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## Physical Activity for Infants

### Activity Ideas:

- Move an object side-to-side to encourage your baby to follow the object by moving their head.
- Gently move and stretch your baby's arms and legs.
- Provide lots of opportunities for tummy time.
- Place a toy in front or to the side of your baby and encourage your baby to reach for it.
- Have your baby kick and splash while closely supervised in the tub.
- Play music and encourage your baby to dance.
- Roll a ball to your baby.
- Blow bubbles and encourage your baby to catch them.
- Set-up cushions for your baby to climb over.
- Hold your baby's hands while they practice walking.



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## Physical Activity for Toddlers

For toddlers, physical activity is all about exploring new challenges and having fun with movement!

### Skills to develop:

- Walking up the stairs
- Pushing and pulling objects while walking forward
- Running
- Walking backwards
- Kicking a ball
- Jumping with 2 feet



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## Physical Activity for Toddlers

### Activity Ideas:

- Roll a ball for your toddler to chase.
- Help your toddler build a fort out of cushions, blankets and chairs.
- Sing songs with actions.
- Have your toddler move like different animals.
- Use a bed sheet like a parachute.
- Try to keep a balloon in the air.
- Dance around with ribbons or scarves.
- Practice throwing a stuffed animal into a laundry basket.
- Push a doll in a stroller or pull a stuffed animal in a wagon.
- Try a game of bowling with plastic bottles.

# Let's Get Active!

*Birthdays  
Connect It  
Red Light, Green Light*



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## Physical Activity for Preschoolers

For preschoolers, physical activity is all about exploring new challenges and having fun with movement!

### **Skills to develop:**

- Walking up the stairs
- Running
- Kicking a ball
- Throwing a ball
- Jumping off both feet
- Balancing on 1 foot
- Hopping on 1 foot





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## Physical Activity for Preschoolers

### Activity Ideas:

- Play a game of Follow the Leader.
- Visit the local playground to swing, slide and climb.
- Try some yoga.
- Play a game of tag.
- Practice kicking a ball toward a target.
- Play a game of freeze dance.
- Throw a scarf in the air and try to catch it as it floats to the ground.
- Have a 'snowball' fight with balled up pieces of paper.
- Try a tricycle or scooter.
- Have a potato sack race.



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## Physical Activity for Kindergarten-aged Children

For children aged 4-6, physical activity is all about energetic play that causes a child to sweat and breathe a little harder

### **Skills to develop:**

- Walking in a straight line
- Changing directions when running
- Throwing and catching a ball
- Climbing playground equipment
- Hopping on 1 foot
- Skipping



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## Physical Activity for Kindergarten-aged Children

### Activity Ideas:

- Help your child build an obstacle course.
- Play a game of catch.
- Try a game of hockey using pool noodles instead of sticks.
- Draw a hopscotch grid using sidewalk chalk.
- Play a game of What Time is it Mr. Wolf?
- Visit a local skating rink or splash pad.
- Have your child make the letters of the alphabet in the air using their hands and feet.
- Try balancing a bean bag on your hand, shoulder or head while walking around.
- Play a game of Simon Says.
- Go for a nature scavenger hunt around the neighbourhood.

# Let's Get Active!

*Body Part Balance  
Chain Tag  
Mirror Mirror*



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## Have a Ball Together! Website Review

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Have a Ball Together!' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'About Us', 'Contact Us', and 'Français'. A search bar is located on the right side of the navigation bar. Below the navigation bar is the website's logo, which consists of a colorful star shape and the text 'Have a Ball Together!'. To the right of the logo is the 'best start meilleur départ' logo, with 'by/par health nexus santé' underneath. Below the logo is a large banner image showing a group of children playing in a park. Overlaid on the banner is the text: 'Have a Ball! includes important information, tips and strategies, and activity and game ideas.' Below the banner is a horizontal menu with the following items: HOME, JUST THE FACTS, FAMILIES, PROFESSIONALS, ACTIVITIES & GAMES, and VIDEOS. Below the menu is a 'Welcome!' section with the following text: 'Children need to be active, so let's *Have a Ball!* Physical activity is essential to healthy child development, and the early years are the best time to give kids an active start. But where do you begin? This website will give you the tools you need to be able to promote and encourage physical activity for children 0-6. Click a button to get started!'. To the right of the text are two buttons: 'For Families' (orange) and 'For Professionals' (purple).

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## Have a Ball Together! Website Review

[HOME](#) > [JUST THE FACTS](#)

### Just the Facts

- About Physical Activity
- Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines
- Benefits of Physical Activity
- About Physical Literacy
- Active Outdoor Play
- Loose Parts Philosophy
- Sedentary Behaviour and Inactivity
- Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines
- Impacts of Inactivity



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## Have a Ball Together! Website Review



### Be a good role model.

The children in your life look up to you, so set an example of an active lifestyle. You don't need to run

marathons, play professional hockey or be a prima ballerina. Simply being active each day by walking, jogging, cycling or swimming is enough to promote well-being. Also, play simple games with your children. They will love you for it, and you'll likely rediscover the joy of being a kid again!

### Find practical solutions to overcoming barriers to activity.

Families can face barriers when getting children physically active. Here are some of the common challenges you may face and some practical solutions for overcoming them:

+ Time

+ Cost

+ Safety

+ Child interest and motivation





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## Have a Ball Together! Website Review

[Home](#) > [Activities & Games](#)

### Activities & Games

Are you ready to get moving? Then you've come to the right place!

Here are over 100 fun and simple games and activities designed to get children active! Please select how you would like to view the activities.

#### Activities by age

- + Infants: 0-18 months
- + Toddlers: 18 months-2.5 years
- + Preschoolers: 2.5-4 years
- + Kindergarten-aged: 4-6 years

#### Activities by space availability

- + On-the-spot activities
- + Small space activities
- + Open space activities

#### Share



#### Find an activity

» Age Not Importar

» Equipment Not In

» Space Not Import

Search

#### More activities to try

- [Pat-a-Cake](#)  
Age: Infant Equipment:  
None Space requirements:  
On-the-spot Activity  
description: Move ...





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## Have a Ball Together! Website Review

### **Just the Facts**

Read the facts about physical activity in early childhood, and why it is so important to healthy development.

### **Activities & Games**

Ready to get moving? Try these fun games and activities. Search by age, activity space, or equipment.

### **Tips & Ideas**

What's the secret to getting kids active? Here are some tips for overcoming common barriers.

### **Videos**

Want to see the information in action? Here are some short videos about physical activity and the early years.

### **Downloads**

Looking for extra inspiration? Click here for useful one-pagers and reminders for your fridge!

### **Additional Resources**

Want more? Check out these links to additional websites with more information, activity ideas and community resources.



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## Problem Solving

- On your own, identify a barrier you are currently facing related to getting children active.
- Move around the space as identified.
- On the presenter's signal, find a partner, discuss your barrier and brainstorm 2 solutions.
- Move around the space again and find a new partner on the presenter's signal.
- Try to brainstorm 2 new solutions.



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## Keep the Momentum Going

### **Group Sharing:**

Find an elbow partner or small group and discuss:

- Do you have any ideas or practices that you've had success with?
- Where do you get your great ideas?
- Do you have go-to resources you consistently use?
- Do you have community-based resources or organizations you have connected with?
- What are some community-based resources or organizations that could provide support?



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## Keep the Momentum Going

### **Spreading the word:**

Find a new elbow partner or small group and discuss ideas for sharing information and promoting physical activity to other important groups and individuals you are involved with. This could include:

- Children you care for
- Daycare or FDK teachers
- Parents
- Community partners
- Colleagues
- Any other groups you think are important!



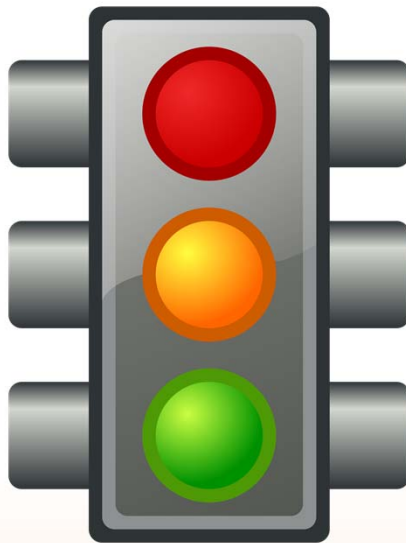
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## Keep the Momentum Going

Developing an Action Plan:



Red light: something you are going to stop doing

Yellow light: something you are going to do less of

Green light: something you are going to start doing or continue to move forward with



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## Additional Resources

### Organizations & Websites:

- Alberta Centre for Active Living (<https://www.centre4activeliving.ca/>)
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (<http://www.csep.ca>)
- Canadian Sport for Life ([www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca))
- Caring for Kids – Active Kids, Healthy Kids  
(<http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/active-kids/active-actifs>)
- Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development – Physical Activity  
(<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/physical-activity>)
- Healthy U – Active Kids (<http://www.healthyalberta.com/842.htm>)
- Parachute (<http://www.parachutecanada.org/>)
- ParticipACTION (<http://www.participaction.com/>)



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## Additional Resources

### More Activity Ideas:

- Early Learning Resource, Ophea
- A Hop, Skip and a Jump: Enhancing Physical Literacy, Mount Royal College Hop Family Resource, LEAP BC (Literacy, Education, Activity and Play)
- Games and Activities, Healthy Beginnings for Preschoolers 2-5
- Lesson Plans, Active for Life
- Physical Activity for Individuals with Special Needs, Canadian Active After School Partnership