



# Being Active: Encouraging physical activity

Getting young people physically active in childhood can set healthy patterns that will last into adulthood. But how can we motivate children and young people to be physically active? This factsheet looks at some top tips to encourage physical activity.

## Tip 1: Choose the right activity for their age

By choosing an appropriate age related activity you can help prevent boredom and frustration. As children get older, differences in ability and personality become more apparent. Commitment and interest level often go along with ability, which is why it's important to find an activity that's right for your child.



## Tip 2: Incorporate activity into their daily routine

The best way for children to be physically active is to incorporate activity into their routine. Make time for exercise. Some children are so overscheduled with homework, music lessons, and other planned activities that they do not have time for exercise. Children 5 to 18 years should do 60 minutes or more physical activity daily. This can include free play at home, active time at school, and participation in classes or organised sports. Teenagers have many choices when it comes to being active, from school sports to after-school interests, such as yoga or skateboarding. It's a good idea to have an exercise plan since it often has to be sandwiched between school and other commitments.

## Tip 3: Provide plenty of opportunity to be active

Children need parents to make activity easy by providing them with the opportunity to attend classes and after school activities. Do what you can to make it easy for your child to exercise by providing transportation and the necessary gear or equipment. In some cases, the right equipment, clothes and shoes might help your child feel comfortable attending an activity or class.

## Tip 4: Set limits

Limit screen time, including time spent on TV, videos, computers, and video games, each day. School-age children are spending more time in front of screens, the challenge for parents is to help them find physical activities they enjoy and feel successful doing. These can range from traditional sports like football and netball to martial arts, biking, hiking, and playing outside, don't forget to set aside some time for free play. Help your child use their free time for more physical activities.

### **Tip 5: Keep the focus on fun**

Children and young people won't do what they don't enjoy. When children enjoy an activity they are more likely to keep it up and want to do more of it especially when their efforts are noticed and praised. The good feeling created by this acknowledgement can make children want to continue and even try new activities.

### **Tip 6: Limit any barriers**

Plan ahead, make sure your child has a convenient time and place to exercise. Provide a safe environment. Make sure your child's equipment and where they practice or play is safe and make sure your child's clothing is comfortable and appropriate for the activity.

### **Tip 7: Get the entire family involved**

It is a great way to spend time together. Parents can teach the love of physical activity and help children fit activity into their everyday lives. Be active yourself and support your child's interests. If you start this early enough, they'll come to regard activity as a normal and fun; part of your family's everyday routine.

### **Tip 8: Be a role model**

Children who regularly see their parents enjoying sports and physical activity are more likely to do so themselves. Help children learn a new sport or another physical activity. Or just have fun together by going for a walk, hike, or bike ride.

### **Tip 9: Make screen time an active time**

When going to play outside isn't an option, your children can play interactive video games that require physical activity such as tennis, bowling or baseball. You also can use dance videos and active video games for some physically-active television time.

### **Tip 10: Get help with household chores**

Encourage your children to participate in active outdoor chores such as raking leaves, pulling weeds, watering plants, sweeping the paths or cleaning the garage. Make the chores feel fun with upbeat music and be sure to join in to get them done as a family.

### **Tip 11: Do not overdo activity**

Exercise and physical activity should not hurt. If it becomes painful, your child should slow down or try a less vigorous activity. As with any activity, it is important not to overdo it. If exercise starts to interfere with school or other activities, talk with your child's doctor.

#### **Sources:**

Physical activity guidelines for children and young people: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/>

Easy Ways to Encourage Your Kids to Get Active <https://www.eatright.org/fitness/exercise/family-activities/easy-ways-to-encourage-your-kids-to-get-active>

Motivating Kids to be Active: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/active-kids.html>

Encourage Your Child to Be Physically Active" (American Academy of Pediatrics 2020)