



Physical Activity in Infancy and Childhood

For many Australian families, life is becoming increasingly inactive. Many people drive rather than walk, work long hours in sedentary jobs, and watch TV or other screen-based entertainment for leisure. However, if your child learns the joy of active play from a young age they can make being physically active a habit for life.

Through active play young children develop healthy bodies, learn to use small and large muscle groups, and develop other important skills. Plus, children find active play lots of fun!

What are the physical activity recommendations for 0-5 year olds?

For the early years, the Federal Government's recommendations are:

- Encourage infants to be physically active from birth. For this age group, supervised floor-based play is ideal.
- Children between one and five years old should be physically active for at least three hours a day, which can be spread throughout the day.
- Infants, toddlers and preschoolers should not be restrained, sedentary or made to stay still for longer than an hour, unless they are sleeping.
- For children aged between two and five, any screen time (TV, computers, DVDs, electronic games) should be limited to less than an hour a day.
- For children aged under two years there should be no screen time at all.

Active play can be simply moving around or creative quiet play. At other times, active play will be much more vigorous – running, jumping, climbing, dancing or swimming.

Using active transport

One of the simplest ways to work physical activity into your and your child's day is active transport.

Active transport can be riding a bike, using a scooter or simply walking. Young children might not be able to walk or pedal for a long period, but they can definitely do some. Consider:

- parking the car a bit further away and walking to where you need to go
- using public transport and walking to and from the stop or station
- trying to cut down on pram or stroller time and encouraging your child to walk instead.

Being active is essential for development

Active play in childhood is essential for all aspects of development, not only physical, but social, emotional and intellectual. By helping children to develop a habit of being active from earliest childhood, you can help them to make it a habit for life. Talk to your child's educators for more active play ideas.

This Parent Fact Sheet is available in different community languages and can be downloaded along with references from www.ecconnections.com.au

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The **Royal Children's Hospital** Melbourne
Centre for Community Child Health

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EDUCATIONAL GRANT FROM

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