

## Did you know...

Preschoolers need physical activity to grow up healthy?

Children who are active are more likely to be active as adults?

Physical activity not only has a powerful and positive impact on physical health and development, it promotes mental health, social well-being and learning?

Many children spend the same amount of time in front of a screen as they spend outdoors?

### HELP YOUR CHILD BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE EVERY DAY.

Preschoolers should get at least 90 minutes to 120 minutes of physical activity daily. Preschoolers (3 through 5 years old) are mastering skills such as running, jumping, and throwing. They develop confidence in their abilities over time when they have opportunities to follow their interests and learn and practice new skills. Preschool children are often very social and imaginative; they love games, dancing, riding tricycles and creating obstacle courses to move through. They are full of ideas and will help you discover endless options for working physical activity into the day!

### DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR PRESCHOOLERS...

- Develops their brains and increases their ability to learn.
- Builds and maintains healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Promotes good sleep.
- Helps them stay at a healthy weight.
- Develops a healthy heart and mind.
- Develops their independence.
- Develops movement skills such as jumping, skipping and hopping.
- Develops social skills such as sharing, communicating, problem-solving, and decision making.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND YOUR FAMILY

Most of us don't get enough activity daily, but physical activity is fun and something you can enjoy together as a family. Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages. You can help your preschooler develop healthy habits by including physical activity in your daily routine. Your whole family will be healthier and you will be supporting learning at the same time.

### TIPS FOR BEING ACTIVE WITH YOUR PRESCHOOLERS

- Make it fun! When physical activity is enjoyable, both you and your children will WANT to play!
- Be active together! Use physical activity as family bonding time. When you play together, she has the opportunity and support to try and master new skills such as: running, jumping, hopping, galloping, pedaling, climbing, catching and throwing.
- Be a great role model for healthy habits. Add physical activity to the things you do already. Park farther away from the door when you go shopping. Walk to get your mail instead of driving up to the mailbox. Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- You don't have to do the same physical activity for a whole hour or even do it all at one time. You and your family can do as many different activities as you want throughout the day in blocks of at least ten minutes. Then, add up the minutes to meet your goal of at least 90-120 minutes of physical activity per day.
- Offer a wide range of opportunities for physical activity as well as some basic equipment:
  - Different kinds of balls and bean bags
  - Old boxes or tunnels to crawl through
  - Tricycle or other riding toy
  - Push-pull toys like wagons, doll buggies or lawn mowers
  - Access to climbing equipment at a playground
- Have a "Movement Parade." March around the room or outside and call out different things that you and she can do like twirl, leap, hop, jump, etc.
- Go on a nature hunt. Find acorns, pine cones, bird feathers, shiny rocks, etc.
- Play simple singing games that involve movement: "Hokey-Pokey," "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," or "If You're Happy and You Know It!"

- If she feels like running, try some fun running games like Tag, Red Light-Green Light, or Freeze Tag.
- Involve your whole family in household tasks: setting the table, sorting laundry, folding clothes, washing dishes, putting away toys, cleaning the house, packing for a trip, caring for the garden, etc.
- Schedule a daily time for physical activity—maybe an hour before or after dinner go for a family walk or play a game outdoors.
- Give your child plenty of opportunities to play outdoors in a safe, supervised environment. Bad weather is no excuse for not being active – just make sure that he/she is dressed appropriately for the weather conditions.
- Set your weekend in motion by planning active family fun. Try a hike in the woods, a walk to a nearby playground, or a dip in the pool.
- Limit the use of strollers. Encourage her to walk.

### LIMIT SCREEN TIME FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO 1-2 HOURS OR LESS EACH DAY.

What is screen time? It's any time spent in front of a screen, for example, watching television or DVDs, using the computer, smart phones, and/or playing video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics, an organization of children's doctors, recommends no more than 1-2 hours a day of screen time for children two and older.

Too much screen time isn't good for your preschooler's health or her physical and mental development. It puts children at an increased risk for obesity. The more time she spends in front of a screen, the less time she is being active, using energy and developing important physical skills like hopping, galloping, skipping, catching, throwing. Also, the more TV she watches, the more likely she is to snack even though she is not hungry, which may lead to weight gain. The average preschooler watches 2.6 hours of television per day!

### TIPS FOR TUNING OUT AND TURNING OFF

Your children may be use to watching TV, so establishing some “media rules” may take time, but it will work. This doesn't mean you can never watch TV again! But setting limits will help her grow up healthy and give you more opportunities to spend quality time together. Kids will find something fun to do if you make it easy and support them with ideas. Try these to start:

- Involve your preschooler in creating a “TV allowance.” Decide together during what time of day TV will be allowed and what shows are okay for viewing. If you and her disagree on appropriate shows, talk with her about why you feel the way you do about certain shows. Remember to limit all screen time to 1-2 hours or less each day.
- Put special toys or materials that she enjoys on a shelf or cupboard in your kitchen: blocks, board books or a craft box with safe items for them to use (crayons, markers, stickers, tape, scissors, glue, and blank paper). She can “work” in the kitchen with you while you make dinner.
- Turn off the TV during dinner and enjoy each other. Ask everyone around the table (this includes you) to share the best and worst parts of their day with each other.
- Move the TVs in your house out of the bedrooms and to a central location, such as the family room, where you can easily watch programs with her and monitor television use by older children. Have one specific time during the day in which age-appropriate, safe and educational TV viewing is okay.
- When she watches television, watch the program together and talk about what you are seeing.
- If you allow her to use a computer, always watch and teach her how to use it appropriately.
- Wait to watch adult-only shows until after your children have gone to bed.
- Create a quiet, cozy corner with picture books, puzzles, and blocks so that she can play quietly.

**“You are your child’s guide and teacher – the best person to help her learn how to live a healthy life! Instead of screen time, focus on positive activities like physical activity to help your child grow up healthy.”**