



How Much Physical Activity Do Children Need?

To remain healthy, children need to be active every day. Health Canada has created Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Healthy Active Living for Children and Youth. The guides recommend that children and youth be active for 90 minutes a day. This 90-minute goal consists of 60 minutes of moderate activity and 30 minutes of vigorous activity every day of the week. Children can build up physical activity throughout the day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.

“Moderate” means activities like brisk walking, skating, biking, or playing outdoors. “Vigorous” means activities like running, basketball or soccer.

Children need to combine three types of physical activity: endurance, flexibility and strength. All contribute to a healthy body.

Health Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Active Living for Children and Youth encourage more time spent being active by participating in physical activity opportunities and less time spent being inactive in front of the television or other screens.

How Much Physical Activity Do Preschoolers Need?

As with older children, preschoolers should be active every day indoors or out.*

- Preschoolers should get at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity daily; Structured physical activity is planned and includes games and activities that are directed by a parent, teacher or caregiver for a specific amount of time.
- Preschoolers should get at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of unstructured physical activity daily. Unstructured physical activity is supervised free time for children to play actively on their own or with other children.
- Preschoolers should avoid being inactive for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.

Physical activity with young children can be done in short intervals. The daily recommended amounts of physical activity can be acquired by adding up many periods throughout the day.

* Source: Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years, National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002.