

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN KIDS AND ADOLESCENTS

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Regular physical activity in children and adolescents promotes good health and fitness. Compared to those who are inactive, physically active youth have higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness and stronger muscles.

World Health Organization's Global Physical Activity Recommendation for Children Ages 5-17:

The scientific evidence available for the age group of 5–17 years supports the overall conclusion that physical activity provides fundamental health benefits for children and youth. Appropriate levels of physical activity contribute to the development of:

- Healthy musculoskeletal tissues (i.e., bones, muscles and joints);
- Healthy cardiovascular system (i.e., heart and lungs);
- Neuromuscular awareness (i.e., coordination and movement control); and
- Maintenance of a healthy body weight.

Moreover, physical activity has been associated with psychological benefits in young people by improving their control over symptoms of anxiety and depression and assisting in social development by providing opportunities for self-expression, building self-confidence, social interaction and integration.

For children and young people, physical activity includes play, games, sports, transportation, chores, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of family, school, and community activities.

In order to improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, and cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers, children and youth age 5–17 should:

1. Accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
2. Engage in daily physical activity for greater than 60 minutes as it will provide additional health benefits.
3. Participate in daily physical activity that is aerobic. Vigorous-intensity activities should be incorporated, including those that strengthen muscles and bones, at least 3 times per week.

These recommendations are relevant to all healthy children age 5–17 years, unless specific medical conditions indicate to the contrary, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, or income level. Whenever possible, children and youth with disabilities should meet these recommendations. However, they should work with their health care provider to understand the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them considering their disability.

If children are currently doing no physical activity, doing amounts below the recommended levels will bring more benefits than doing none at all. They should start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time.

The concept of accumulation refers to meeting the goal of 60 minutes per day by performing activities in multiple shorter sessions spread throughout the day (e.g., 2-4 bouts of 15-30 minutes each), then adding together the time spent during each of these sessions.

Children should participate each day in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities that are enjoyable and designed to achieve optimal health, wellness and fitness benefits.

Extended periods (periods of two hours or more) of inactivity are discouraged for children, especially during the daytime hours.

