

Background Information for Teachers

- Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Most of this should be either moderate or high intensity activity.
- Regular physical activity helps with:
 - Controlling weight
 - Reducing the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers
 - Strengthening bones and muscles
 - Raising HDL (“good”) cholesterol
 - Improved mental health
 - Gaining more self-confidence and higher self-esteem
- Being aware of children’s ethnic and cultural background can help you know how to best teach them about physical activity choices. Children may not be familiar with games and group activities and will be more likely to take part if they know what to expect.
- Lead by example—children make more healthy choices when they see adults including healthy habits in their lives. Model and encourage an active lifestyle. Praise and encouragement help youth to be active.

GOAL

Children will know it is important to exercise every day.

- Physically fit children:
- Identify visual stimuli faster than sedentary children.
 - Are better able to concentrate
 - Are able to devote more cognitive resources to a task and do so for longer periods of time compared to sedentary children.

- Physical activity contributes to:
- Brain Growth
 - Social and Communication Skills
 - Hand-eye Coordination
 - Cognitive Skills
 - School Readiness

Type of Physical Activity	Examples for Preschool Children
Aerobic with moderate-intensity	Active recreation like hiking, brisk walking and bicycle riding.
Aerobic with Vigorous-Intensity	Active games involving running, and chasing such as tag; jumping rope; swimming
Muscle-Strengthening	Push-aways from the wall for chest and arms; Leg lifts for stomach and back.
Bone-Strengthening	Games like hop-scotch; hopping, skipping, jumping

Healthy Habits-Move and Learn throughout the day!

At Meals and Snacks

Help create conversations at meals and snacks that reinforce healthy choices. Remember, this includes not only the foods we eat but the activities we take part in as well. During the meal, talk with children about what they like to do at home for exercise. Ask open-ended questions and then pause, listening to children's responses. Make a chart/graph of their responses and display it in the classroom.

Centers

Put a model of the human body or an animal body that shows the muscles and bones into the **Discovery Center**. Let children make observational drawings.

Add a **dramatic play** center for a Sports Equipment store or an exercise center/gym.

Transitions

Use songs and chants to reinforce new information and to emphasize key messages about the importance of movement and exercise for health.

As you dismiss students from circle time ask them to identify a favorite physical activity. Make a point of letting students know that things like walking the dog, dancing with your family or raking leaves in the yard are all good ways to get exercise.

Home-School Connection

Information to families: Send home a newsletter or class letter that gives parents the information that you are teaching children about physical activity and tells them about what you will be studying. Also, keep families informed of your daily activities with daily take-home cards.

Families contributing to the classroom: Let families know ways they can help such as 1) writing on a 3X5 card that you have sent home about their favorite way(s) their family gets exercise.

Families at School: Create a consensus board around physical activity. We know children are influenced by messages they see in their daily lives. Often these messages come from the media and are not always around healthy choices. Creating a consensus board telling children and families that you make healthy choices can have a strong influence on their decisions. This is an area in your classroom or hallway that provides a message to children and families about healthy habits. You can change the theme as the school year progresses. Use topics explored in the Healthy Habits Seminar Series throughout the year including 5-2-1-0, My Plate, hand washing for health, healthy breakfast choices, favorite fruit or favorite vegetable, exercise, etc.