

## **Have a Ball – Physical Activity for Children**

Voiceover: Physical activity is a key part of a child's development and the early years are the best time to give a child an active start. Physical activity for children 6 and under doesn't need to be structured! Signing up for a team or taking lessons is an option but in the end, it all comes down to getting kids moving! This will help them grow, be healthy and enjoy physical activity throughout their life.

Before a child can let loose in the playground or on a sports field, they need to develop simple movement skills: like running, climbing, throwing or catching. This is called physical literacy. Physical literacy is developed when children have lots of opportunities to play and experiment with movement.

Physical activity can mean different things for different age groups. For infants, it's reaching, rolling, grabbing and crawling.

For toddlers and preschoolers, it's dancing, running and exploring.

For older children, it can be skipping, hopping and riding bikes.

Children should be active every day, both inside and outside. When children are outside, they move more, sit less and play longer! It gives them an environment to experiment with movement, test their physical limits and engage in different types of play.

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology - or CSEP - has released 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the early years, children and youth.

Children less than 1 year old should be active several times a day - especially through floor-based play. This includes at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread through the day while awake.

Toddlers aged 1 to 2 should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity throughout the day, at any intensity.

Preschoolers aged 3 to 4 should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity throughout the day, of which at least 60 minutes is energetic play.

And children 5 to 11 should accumulate 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity each day. You can tell if children are at this intensity if they are sweating and are breathing harder. Children 5 to 11 should also include activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least three days per week. These would be weight-bearing activities such as jumping or climbing on the playground.

The 24-Hour Movement Guidelines include information about sedentary behaviour, or the amount of time children spend not being active while they are awake. Limiting the

amount of time children spend watching TV or playing video games is included in the Guidelines.

As far as screen time goes, it's not recommended for children under the age of 2. For children 2 to 4 years old, screen time should be limited to less than one hour a day. And for children 5 to 11, it should be limited to less than two hours per day.

Sleep is another component of the Guidelines. Sufficient, good quality-sleep with consistent bed and wake-up times is important for health.

Replacing sedentary screen time with additional energetic play, and trading indoor for outdoor time, while preserving sufficient sleep, can provide greater health benefits.

Whether at home, in childcare, at school, or in the in the community, we all have a role in getting kids active. And when kids are active, they are more likely to lead healthy and happy lives!

For more information, tips and activity ideas, visit [haveaballtogether.ca](http://haveaballtogether.ca)