

Transcript Physical Education for Preschool Children

Home

(A smiling preschool boy wears a safety helmet while holding a bicycle. The background is a cityscape of San Antonio, rolling hills and trees.)

Welcome to the Head Start course Physical Activity for Preschool Children!

About this Course

(A barefooted preschool child hangs from a parallel bar.)

Participating in regular physical activity is important for the health, fitness, and well-being of preschool children. This course provides ideas for helping your child become more physically active. You will learn...

- the importance of physical activity for children
- daily recommended amounts of physical activity
- fun and engaging physical activity ideas appropriate for children, and the
- definition of screen time and recommended daily limits.

Importance of Physical Activity

(In a soccer field, a young boy runs to kick a soccer ball into the goal post. The soccer ball can be clicked on to reveal more information.)

Regular physical activity is important for the health, fitness, and well-being of preschool children. Let's find out why children score big when they stay physically active!

Compared to their inactive peers, active children tend to have

- stronger bones
- stronger muscles
- less body fat
- greater cardiovascular fitness

Motor and Social Skills

(On the background of a sunny park, the words “social skills” are written across the sky. A young girl stretches her hands while she plays on a treehouse. The word “coordination” is written beside her. A preschool boy wears a safety helmet while he rides a scooter. A happy dog runs after him. The word “balance” is written beside him. Two other boys play with a basketball and soccer ball. The words “motor skills” are written besides them.)

Active children develop...

- Social skills while interacting with other children
- Coordination
- Motor Skills, and
- Balance.

Healthy Balance

(A slightly heavy preschool boy is surrounded by images and words. A graphic of a heart with the words “heart disease”; a syringe and a monitor with the word “diabetes”; a graphic of a bended knee with the word “osteoporosis”; an image of a clogged artery with the words “high cholesterol”; a blood pressure cuff with the words “high blood pressure.”)

Active children maintain healthy body weight, reducing the chance of developing risk factors for chronic diseases.

Weight gain can lead to chronic diseases, such as

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol, and
- Osteoporosis.

Fit and Strong

(A smiling, preschool girl with outstretched arms; behind her a graphic of the human skeleton. Beside her three phrases are written: less body fat, stronger bones and muscles, greater cardiovascular fitness.)

Compared to their inactive peers, active children tend to have

- Less body fat
- Stronger bones and muscles, and
- Greater cardiovascular fitness.

Structured and Unstructured Activities

(Four girls sit at their desk in a Head Start classroom working with manipulatives.)

Recommendations for daily physical activity for preschoolers include guidelines for both structured and unstructured activities. So, what is the difference? Let's peek into a typical day in a Head Start classroom to see.

Video : (Various scenes of Head Start children participating in structured and unstructured play. In the classroom, the teacher guides the children in exercises. In the playground, children are left to do unstructured play—running, playing on the swings, and tag with their friends.)

In the Head Start Program, children participate in structured and unstructured play daily. Head Start uses the “I am Moving, I am Learning” curriculum to promote activity throughout the day and encourage children to make healthy food choices.

Structured physical activities help promote the preschooler's gross motor skills and lay the foundation for future activities. They are purposeful and specific for the preschoolers' current developmental level. Activities are directed by an adult with knowledge of physical activity principles.

On the other hand, unstructured physical activities are free active play and self-directed. Although supervised by an adult, the adult does not organize or lead the activity. Children explore their surroundings, play with others, and use their imaginations to invent their own activities.

Both structured and unstructured physical activities are important for a child's development and should be encouraged daily. Talk with your child about the types of activities he or she does at school. You might discover a new activity that your child enjoys that can be easily done at home!

Test Your Knowledge

(In a basketball court, there are two baskets with the words “structured” and “unstructured” written on the background panel of the goals. Four basketballs contain the words “15 minutes”, “30 minutes”, “60 minutes”, and “60 plus minutes” separately.)

Guess the *minimum amount* of structured and unstructured physical activity a preschool child should get daily. Drop the ball in the correct hoop.

Correct! Shape America recommends more than 60 minutes unstructured physical activity daily for preschool children.

Correct! Shape America recommends at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity daily for preschool children.

Let's free play!

When considering the activity needs of a preschool child, the importance of child-led, free play should not be overlooked. Select the buttons to find out why free play is so important.

Leads: When parents engage in free play with their child, the child gets the chance to lead the activity, practice adult roles, and enjoy the undivided attention of their parents.

Explores: Free play provides parents the opportunity to fully interact with their child, imagine and explore together, and to see the world through their child's eyes.

Builds: Free play helps children learn to manage stress, build confidence, work with others, resolve conflict, overcome fears, and develop resiliency.

Age-Appropriate Movements

(In one image, a preschool boy reaches down to pick up a basketball. In a second image, the same boy twists a hoop around. A third image of the same boy shows him stretching as he laughs out loud.)

When encouraging your preschool child to become physically active, focus on engaging him or her in activities that promote age-appropriate movements.

Examples of movements appropriate for preschool children include kicking, catching, rolling, striking, bouncing, throwing. It also includes turning, swinging, balancing, shaking, twisting, stretching, and bending, as well as walking, running, marching, hopping, jumping, skipping, leaping, galloping, and climbing.

Important Reminders

(Two preschool boys, one looking downcast, the other holds a ball over his head.)

During the preschool years, children are developing and exploring their surroundings. This is a perfect time to nurture positive feelings towards physical activity. Below are two important concepts to remember.

1. Physical activity should not be used as a *form of punishment* as this can lead to negative feelings towards exercise. Example: running laps for bad behavior
2. Have your preschooler participate in a *variety of activities* rather than specialize in one. This provides your child the opportunity to choose what activities he or she likes best.

Physically Engaging and Fun!

A key to engaging children in regular physical activity is to find activities they enjoy.

View the video for ideas on keeping your preschool child engaged in fun and age-appropriate physical activities.

Video transcript:

During the preschool years, children begin developing awareness of their bodies' ability to move. These movements lay the foundation for future participation in organized sports and recreational activities, which also provide opportunities to socialize and make new friends.

When encouraging your child to be physically active, make sure to focus on including physical movements that are age appropriate. Doing activities that are not could lead to injury.

Ideas for getting your child to be physically active outdoors could include:

- raking the leaves, gardening, riding bikes, and going on nature hikes.
- walking the dog. Have your child hold the leash and choose the route you walk.

- taking advantage of area parks where your child can run and play with others.
- participating in a community sports program. T-ball, soccer, tag football, dance, gymnastics, and basketball are great choices for young children.

Ways to keep your child active indoors could include:

- creating an indoor obstacle course and having your child skip down the hallway, march around the couch, and jump like a frog across the kitchen. Be creative and have your child help you come up with other activities to include!
- putting on music, having a dance party, and exercising together as a family. You may want to check out the exercise videos from the local library for some fun family time!

Teach your child that he or she can be active anywhere and that no equipment is needed to exercise!

Keeping Hydrated!

(An image of a clock showing an interval of 15-20 minutes. Next to the clock a young girl drinks water out of a bottle. An image of a young boy eating a slice of watermelon; behind him some oranges and red grapes.)

Physical activity, especially in a hot environment, can greatly increase a child's need for fluids. It is essential that preschool children have water available to consume throughout the day, especially before, during, and after physical activity.

Encourage your child to take a water break every 15-20 minutes — especially important in hot or humid environments.

Offer your child snacks that have a high water content. Great options are watermelon, grapes, and orange slices.

Test Your Knowledge

(Preschool girl plays with a tablet. Three stopwatches show 1 hour, 2 hours, and 3 hours on the face.)

A preschool child should be inactive no more than how many hour or hours at one time? Choose your answer: 1 hour, 2 hours, or 3 hours.

Your answer is correct! Preschoolers should not be inactive for more than 60 minutes at a time, except when sleeping.

Signs of Dehydration

(Anxious preschool boy points as if requesting assistance.)

Adults should watch children closely during physical activity for signs of dehydration. Be aware that children wearing helmets, protective pads, heavy clothes, or uniforms, have a reduced ability to dissipate heat due to the additional equipment and clothing.

Click on the red icons to read signs to look for in your child.

Signs of dehydration include stomach cramps, leg cramps, dry mouth, thirst, fatigue, tiredness, headache, dizziness and confusion.

Be aware!

(Anxious preschool boy points as if requesting assistance. An exclamation sign warning to seek medical attention is on his side.)

If you suspect your child is becoming dehydrated, encourage him or her to

- stop the activity
- rest in an area out of the sun, and
- drink fluids to alleviate thirst.

Severe dehydration and associated heat illnesses can be life threatening! Be aware! Seek immediate help from advanced medical care if conditions worsen or do not improve.

Physical Inactivity

(Young girl focuses on a smart phone. Around her is a weight scale with a text box that reads “becoming overweight”; a clock with a text box that reads “trouble sleeping”; and a third text box that reads “attention problems.”)

“Screen time” refers to time spent in front of a screen—watching TV, playing video games, playing on the computer, tablets, or smart phones. The concern with excess screen time is that children are often sitting down and physically inactive.

Physical inactivity increases a child’s risk to becoming overweight, having attention problems, and trouble sleeping.

Screen Time Recommendations

(Young girl hides her face behind a tablet. On the left of her, a text box reads “for children under 2 years; on the right another text box that reads “for children 2 years and older.” On the lower right of the page, a button reads “Healthy Tip.”)

Try limiting the time your preschool child spends inactive to *no more than 60 minutes* at a time. If your child is watching multiple TV shows, or movies in a row, this can quickly accumulate to several hours of inactivity.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 2 years old be discouraged from screen time. Instead, do interactive activities that promote brain development, such as

- read books
- play games, and
- sing songs.

For children 2 years and older, screen time should be limited to 1-2 hours of quality programming a day.

A Healthy Tip

Limit your preschool child to watching no more than one show at a time. When the show ends, have your child engage in physical activity, such as

- playing outside
- going for a walk together
- dancing around the house to music

Become a role model!

A parent’s positive attitude is contagious when it comes to physical activity! If a parent shows interest in an activity, chances are the child will too. Keep the following ideas in mind as you encourage your child and family to stay physically active together!

Idea: Be prepared for impromptu physical activity breaks. Try keeping a pair of tennis shoes and portable equipment, such as jump ropes, baseballs and bats, chalk, and balls in the trunk of your car. You can find inexpensive outdoor items in the dollar sections of most stores.

Idea: Like many busy families, you may find it challenging to meet your physical activity goal daily. Instead of trying to do it all at once, break it up into several 10-15 minute sessions throughout the day. Find activities the whole family can participate in together such as bicycling, hiking, and camping.

Idea: Our digital world makes it hard for us to detach from “screen” time. Become a role model and try limiting your screen time, outside of work, to 2 hours a day. Turn off the cell phone during meals and spend time talking as a family about your day!

Idea: Make physical activity a part of your lifestyle. Whenever possible, add fun activities to your daily routine and encourage your child to be active too. You will find that your child is often more interested in the time spent together than the activity itself.

Congratulations! You have successfully completed this course.

In this course you learned why regular physical activity is important for the health, fitness, and well-being of preschool children. You also learned the recommended amount of physical activity preschool children should engage in on a daily basis. Information over “screen time” and ideas on how to limit the amount of time your child participates in it were provided. We hope the information you learned in this course provides fun and new ways for your child to be physically active throughout the day.

To print your [Certificate of Completion](#), please certify that you have finished the course, then click Submit.

Type your name in the box below and click the Next button.