

Physical Activity Factsheet

How we use and move our bodies is essential in living a healthier and more balanced lifestyle. Exercise for children is very important for their natural development. Being involved in exercise can help to develop general fitness, balance and coordination, help build muscles and bones, improve sleep quality and boost our immune systems to fight off infections.

Exercise also produces endorphins and serotonin which is just one of many ways that regular physical activity can help us fight off negative mental health problems. Physical activity also provides an opportunity for us to socialise, make new friends and develop new interests.

How much exercise should a child be doing?

- Under 5s should aim for at least 180 minutes per day
- Children aged 5-18 should aim for at least 60 minutes per day (moderate/vigorous intensity)
- Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity per week.
- Children and young people should aim to do both aerobic exercises and exercises to strengthen their muscles and bones
- They should aim to take part in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscles and bones

Moderate Activity - This is any activity that raises your heart rate, makes you breathe faster and makes you feel warmer. Such as: walking, jumping, running, catching, swimming, football, dancing, skipping, tennis, cycling, roller blading or skateboarding.

Bone and Muscle Strengthening Activity - This refers to any physical activity that increases the strength and power of your muscles and bones. This can include: gymnastics, jumping, climbing, sit-ups, press ups, martial arts and football

Children and young people aged 5 to 18 who are living with a disability should:

- Try to aim to do 20 minutes of physical activity a day
- This can be split into smaller chunks of activity spread throughout the day if needed
- It is important to do activities around 3 times per week that are management but also challenging to build on strength and balance

Focus on Fun

It is important to find physical activity that is fun and enjoyable! Play in exercise can help to transform physical activity from what can sometimes feel hard into an enjoyable and motivating experience. When movement feels fun—whether through games, sports, or playful activities—it reduces stress, sparks creativity, and encourages consistency, making people more likely to stay active long-term.

Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT)

Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (N.E.A.T) is a fancy name to describe the energy that you burn from daily activity. This is basically any movement that you do that is not from exercise. It can make a big difference in helping you to get active and increase movement throughout the day.

None structured activity means that you can count your exercise from doing day to day chores like tidying your room, helping out in the garden and running a vacuum cleaner through your house.

It can also include playing out and taking walks. In fact it's a great way to keep you active and keep you from too sitting too much and spending too much time in front of a screen.

Examples of N.E.A.T Activity

 HOOVERING	 GARDENING	 WASHING POTS
 DOG WALKING	 ORGANISING	 HANGING WASHING
 CLEANING WINDOWS	 COOKING	 MAKE THE BED

💡 Top tips to support your child to be more active:

- Make it fun, not forced! Try to encourage movement by turning it into fun games or themed activities.
- Consider variety and try to offer your child a range of options.
- Use technology wisely! There are lots of fun active games and workouts available online that can offer a free and easy way to be more active.
- You may also want to however consider screen time limits. Reducing the amount of time spent sedentary watching or using screens can increase opportunities within the day for movement.
- Integrate activity into daily routines. This could include things like walking to and from school or having a daily active chore to complete.
- Create a positive environment and try to encourage your child by offering regular praise. It is also important to be a positive example for your child, so get involved in fun games and activities alongside them.
- Consider realistic goals for increasing activity. If your child is currently not very active, the jump to 60 minutes per day may seem impossible. Try instead by introducing small bursts of activity such as 10-20 minutes and build up from there.

Create a family activity jar:

Fill a jar with slips of paper, each listing a different activity, game or fun challenge. Every day (or how often you choose), a family member pulls a slip and everyone does the activity together. This is a fun and easy way to help the whole family to move more throughout the week.

