



Child Care Resources

Fitness for Children Tidbit

Children need physical activity to build strength, coordination and confidence – all of which lay the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. Active kids tend to have stronger muscles and bones, less risk of becoming overweight, a lower chance of getting type 2 diabetes, lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels, and even a better outlook on life.



10 Reasons to Build in Fitness

- Improves cardiovascular endurance and heart health.
- Improves respiration and breathing.
- Improves muscle strength.
- Increases flexibility of the muscles.
- Prevents fractures, encourages bone growth and protects against osteoporosis.
- Prevents obesity.
- Impacts brain power.
- Increases self regulation skills.
- Associated with improved cognitive skills including executive functioning, attention, memory and verbal comprehension.
- Improves self esteem and attitude.

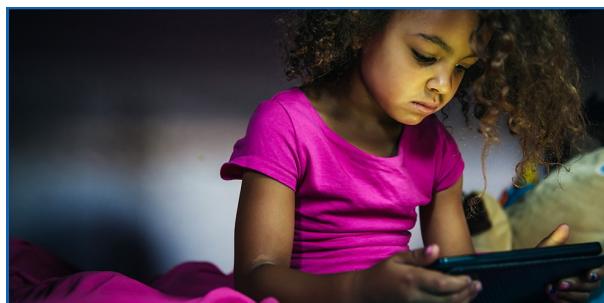


Types of Fitness

Weight-Bearing Activity During physical activity, bones and muscles work against gravity. These activities cause bones to build more cells and become stronger. Everyone needs weight-bearing exercise throughout their whole life. For children, weight bearing activity can include crossing the monkey bars, bouncing and throwing a ball, pedaling a tricycle or running around the jungle gym. All of these choices build strength and endurance.

Cardiovascular Activity Regular physical activity also strengthens the heart and lungs. Cardio does just that. Types of cardio for children include walking, jogging, or running, playing games that require movement such as soccer, basketball, or baseball, and playing 'tag'. Cardiovascular activity is needed throughout life as it lowers blood pressure, improves muscle strength and flexibility, reduces stress and depression, helps control weight, and even improves sleep.

Obstacles to Fitness for Children



Screen Time

Have you ever noticed how long a child is able to sit and look at a screen? Much of this time should be broken up with opportunities for activity. Make sure to offer a variety of choices where kids can take a break and be active. It helps to have activities readily available; leave options for building out throughout the class, or have your outdoor materials available for use so that children can choose between running on the playground to playing a sport with a friend.

'I'm Not Good at Sports'

The trick to getting less active kids involved in sports is by identifying what it is they like to do. We do this by asking questions, and really listening. If a child says they like going on walks with their parents, build in time during the day to take a walk as a group. If they say they like flying kites, have an activity where kids make their own kites and take them out flying. Let these children lead the activities to build confidence in their skills by doing what they enjoy.

Lack of Materials

Helping kids stay active doesn't always have to involve equipment. Create a fitness grab jar with cards that say things like, 'do 5 laps around the classroom', or '10 jumping jacks' to name a few. Ask families to do the same at home to make this a regular practice. You can encourage even the youngest child by helping them to stand, walk, or rolling the ball across the floor. Do things that involve moving their bodies, taking steps, or stretching.

Additional Resources

Healthy Children – Encouraging Your Child to be Active

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Encouraging-Your-Child-to-be-Physically-Active.aspx>

Live Science – Go Outside and Play: Tips to Get Kids Moving

<https://www.livescience.com/54631-tips-to-get-kids-active-outside.html>

Harvard Health Publishing – 5 Winning Ways for Kids to Burn Energy

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/5-winning-ways-for-kids-burn-energy-2020060219963>