

Physical Activity for Toddlers – Top Tips for Parents/Carers

All information taken from the NHS website. For more information see:

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/toddler/activities/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-children.aspx>

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Documents/children-under-5-walking.pdf>



Healthy Early Years Partnership

Keeping Active

- Toddlers love to move around. All physical activities, whether it's walking, running, climbing, jumping or dancing, help their muscles, bones and brains develop. Ideally, they need 180 minutes of activity a day. But don't worry, it doesn't have to be all at once – 10 or 20 minutes here and there all counts towards the total. And all sorts of activity counts, whether it's indoors or outdoors, it's just about getting them moving every day.
- Playtime activities are equally important and really helpful for language development, cognitive growth (thinking, concentrating, problem solving, decision making) fine and gross motor skills (big and small physical movements) and social interaction.
 - Toddling - Practise makes perfect, and it's an important part of growing up, so it's good to try and make sure your baby is free to have a toddle when they get the urge.
 - Walking - Once your little one has mastered walking, try to encourage this as much as possible. When you can, allow some extra time to get to the shops, or park, and let your toddler walk some of the way.
 - Go to the Park - Get them running around the park – take a ball and practice throwing, catching and kicking it around, these simple activities teach skills like co-ordination, balance and agility.
 - Activity groups - Your local leisure centre may have fun activities for parents and toddlers. Or you could join a pre-school playgroup, so that your toddler can learn new skills and make new friends. If you receive benefits, you may be entitled for help with childcare and early education.
 - Sensory Play - Toddlers love sensory play and it's a wonderful way to spend time with them and let them explore the world. It's all about stimulating their senses through touch, smell, taste, seeing and hearing. Look out for playgroups that offer messy play areas, or create your own messy play area at home.
 - Swimming - Splashing about in the pool helps develop water confidence, works and strengthens muscles, and is a great form of exercise. To avoid accidents, children should be supervised at all times when playing with water.
 - At home - If it's a stay-at-home sort of day, try to limit the screen time and get them moving around instead. Have a game of hide-and-seek, see who can do the most jumping jacks, create an obstacle course or stick some music on and have a dance-off. There are lots of ways to get them moving and exercising at home!

UK Physical Activity Guidelines for under 5s who are capable of walking

- Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).
- Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines
 - Activities which involve movements of all the major muscle groups, i.e. the legs, buttocks, shoulders and arms, and movement of the trunk from one place to another
 - Energetic play, e.g. climbing frame or riding a bike

- More energetic bouts of activity, e.g. running and chasing games
- Walking/skipping to shops, a friend's home, a park or to and from a school
- Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:
 - Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
 - Reducing time spent in a pushchair or car seat – this can also help to break up long periods of sedentary behaviour
- Benefits of being active for at least 180 minutes each day include
 - Improves cardiovascular health
 - Contributes to a healthy weight
 - Improves bone health
 - Supports learning of social skills
 - Develops movement and co-ordination