



Physical Activity Standards for Child Care

All Children (birth–6 years) should participate daily in:

- ◆ At least 2–3 occasions of outdoor play.
- ◆ Two or more adult-led activities or games that get the child up and moving.
- ◆ Plenty of opportunities to move and practice gross motor movements.

Age-specific Guidelines Per Day:

Infants (birth–1 year)

- ◆ Outdoor play for infants may include riding in a stroller, but should have opportunities for gross motor play too.
- ◆ Provide tummy time for at least 3–5 minutes when infant is awake, increasing the amount of time as the infant shows he/she enjoys the activity.



Toddlers (1–3 years)

- ◆ Provide at least 60–90 minutes of outdoor play.
- ◆ Provide at least 60–90 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity.

Children can accumulate physical activity over several smaller periods of time of at least 10 minutes each.

Preschoolers (3–6 years)

- ◆ Provide at least 60–90 minutes of outdoor play.
- ◆ Provide at least 90–120 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity.

Toddlers and Preschoolers should get 60 minutes up to several hours of unstructured physical activity (or free play) each day. This free play could be made up of outdoor play and/or moderate to vigorous activity.



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Provide Adult-led Physical Activity

- ◆ Caregivers and teachers should include two or more adult-led activities or games that encourage movement each day.
- ◆ Caregivers and teachers should participate in trainings to learn games and activities that promote physical activity among young children.

Encourage Free Play

- ◆ Children should have plenty of space for physical activity both inside and outside.
- ◆ Teachers should not sit during active play.
- ◆ Teachers should provide prompts and praise for active play (e.g., “you kicked the ball very well!”).
- ◆ Facilities should provide various types of portable and fixed equipment that is available to children at all times. This equipment can be inexpensive and/or homemade and may include natural materials such as rocks, sticks, vines, water play, etc.

Play is a child’s natural way to get physical activity, but all physical activity is not vigorous enough to provide health benefits.

Limit Screen Time

- ◆ Media (TV, videos, and DVDs) and computer use should not be permitted for children younger than 2 years.
- ◆ Children 2 years and older in early child care should be limited to no more than 30 minutes once per week, and for educational or physical activity use only.

Encourage Outdoor Play

- ◆ The North Carolina Division of Child Development requires a minimum of 1 hour daily outdoor time and daily gross motor activities. This outdoor time may be broken up into 2–3, 30-minute time periods per day.
- ◆ Provide outdoor play every day as long as the weather does not pose a health or safety risk (wind chill factor at or below -15°F and heat index at or above 90°F , as identified by the National Weather Service).
- ◆ Child care providers and children should be instructed to wear clothing and shoes that allow for easy movement and active play.
- ◆ Children should be protected by the sun with shade, sun-protective clothing, and sunscreen (at least SPF 15) with parental permission.

Decrease Inactive Time

- ◆ Avoid taking away active play time from children who are not behaving.
- ◆ Infants and children should not be seated for more than 15 minutes at a time when not eating or sleeping.

Definitions:

Moderate to vigorous activity—Any activity that increases heart rate and makes the child breathe hard enough so that he/she can not say more than a few words. Examples include running, climbing, skipping, jumping, or dancing.

Gross motor movements—Movements from large muscle groups and whole body movement such as sitting up, crawling, climbing, throwing, walking, or hopping.

Materials adapted from 1) American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2010. *Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education: Selected Standards from Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition*. http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/PDFVersion/preventing_obesity.pdf

2) National Association for Sport and Physical Education. 2011. *Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children From Birth to Age 5, 2nd Edition* <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalGuidelines/ActiveStart.cfm>