



## Creating Play-Rich Early Environments: Using Play to Support Children's Physical Health



As children's first teachers, parents and caregivers play a vital role in supporting their children's healthy development. While it may sound like a big task, the first step is simple: incorporate developmentally appropriate activities into your daily routines!

### Physical Activity Recommendations

#### Birth to one year old:

Caregivers should encourage their infants to practice movement skills while their infant is awake. These skills include supporting their head, rolling, crawling, walking, and picking up both small and large objects. Include at least 30 minutes of tummy time every day.

#### Ages two to five years old:

It is recommended that toddlers remain physically active throughout the entire day through a combination of play-based activities. Aim to include a mix of structured, adult-led play and unstructured, free play every day.

- Structured play activities follow rules to reach a specific goal. Examples include assembling a LEGO set, playing organized sports like soccer, and playing tag.
- Unstructured play is child-led, improvised, and creative. It does not follow a specific set of rules. Examples include playing with blocks, creating new games to play, and improvised dance.

#### Ages six years old and older:

Children in this age range should get at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day. There should be a mix of aerobic (running, swimming, jump roping) and bone- and muscle-strengthening activities (climbing, yoga, basketball, bodyweight exercises).



## Playful Activity Ideas

Consider using these activities to get your family up and moving!

### Infants and Young Toddlers: Household Item Play

With supervision, give your child their own spoon at meal time or give them a child-safe bowl and spoon to play with. You can also give your baby blocks and balls to strengthen their grip, practice their holding skills, and improve dexterity.

### Pre-k: Muddy Maneuvers

Even though mud is messy and slippery, it provides a lot of great play opportunities for you and your child. Let your child take off their shoes; squish mud between their toes and fingers; make handprints, footprints, and mudpies; and more! Just bring some water and towels to clean up after!



### Kindergarten: Nature Hunt

Take a walk in nature with your child and try to find local animals, plants, and bugs. If you have them, bring binoculars to see how far away you can see and a magnifying glass to get a closer look at bugs and plants. You can research information online about local plantlife and wildlife to create a scavenger hunt and list of fun facts! For example, what type of animal is it? What does it eat?

### School Age: Hold that Animal Pose (Yoga)

Challenge your child to pose like a giraffe, flamingo, and other animals to help build their muscles, practice their balance, and work on patience. You can find examples of yoga animal poses beforehand or tune in to your creativity to create poses (with your child) on the spot! For an extra challenge, ask them to hold a book, milk jug, or other household item while holding the pose.

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## Resources

### Developmentally Appropriate Parenting Series

Developmentally Appropriate Parenting is a family resource content series developed by Trying Together as an effort to empower caregivers to create high-quality experiences at the earliest stages of their child's life. To learn more, visit: [tryingtogether.org/parenting-resources](https://tryingtogether.org/parenting-resources)

### Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative

The Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative is a group of organizations dedicated to advancing the importance of play in the lives of children, families, and communities in the Pittsburgh region. Read their blog to learn about playful activities for children of all ages: [bit.ly/playful-blog](https://bit.ly/playful-blog)

### KidsHealth

The KidsHealth website features a wide range of information on childhood health topics such as exercise, breastfeeding, nutrition, and more. To learn more, visit: [bit.ly/kidshealth-topics](https://bit.ly/kidshealth-topics)

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