

Pediatricians want all families to be physically active for life

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Parents, would you answer “true” or “false” to these statements?

- My children and I are physically active enough to break a sweat every day.
- My children probably will be physically active as adults.
- I will be physically active when I am a grandparent.

If you mostly answered “true,” you are teaching your child about lifelong physical literacy. A physically literate person *can* and *wants to* be physically active as a child and as an adult.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says physical activity is important for everyone, including infants, children, teens and children with special needs. Parents also should be active role models and focus on fun.

The AAP recommends kids 6 years and older get 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most days of the week. Young children need at least three hours of physical activity per day, in bursts. Infants also need interactive play several times every day. For activity ideas by age, see the chart below.

Most kids don’t move enough. Just 25% get a healthy amount. Many parents are not active, either.

Making time for moderate to vigorous activity on most days will keep kids and parents healthy. It helps prevent obesity, heart disease and diabetes and helps students focus in school.

As kids become teenagers, they tend to be less physically active. But staying active helps teens avoid risk-taking behaviors like smoking, drinking and using drugs, the AAP says. They sleep better and have fewer symptoms of depression.

The AAP urges families to make lifelong physical activity a goal. It’s the best medicine parents can give their kids for a lifetime of health.

Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers	Elementary students	Middle schoolers	Teenagers
Tummy time while awake	Neighborhood walks or free play outside	Tumbling, throwing, catching	Free play and organized sports focused on fun	Activities that encourage socialization. Avoid specializing in one sport.	Activities that encourage socialization and competition, when appropriate
30+ minutes throughout day.	3+ hours throughout day.	3+ hours a day, including 1 hour of moderate to vigorous activity.	60+ minutes of activity most days. Muscle/bone strengthening activities 3 days a week.	60+ minutes of activity most days. Muscle/bone strengthening 3 days a week.	60+ minutes of activity most days. Muscle/bone strengthening 3 days a week.

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