



CHILDREN'S
HOME
SOCIETY OF
CALIFORNIA

www.chs-ca.org

For more information, please call
(888) CHS-4KIDS (888-247-4543). If
you are interested in learning more
about our programs and services,
please visit www.chs-ca.org



Corporate Headquarters

1300 West Fourth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 240-5900
(213) 240-5945 Fax

©2025 Children's Home Society of California

C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A

EXERCISE

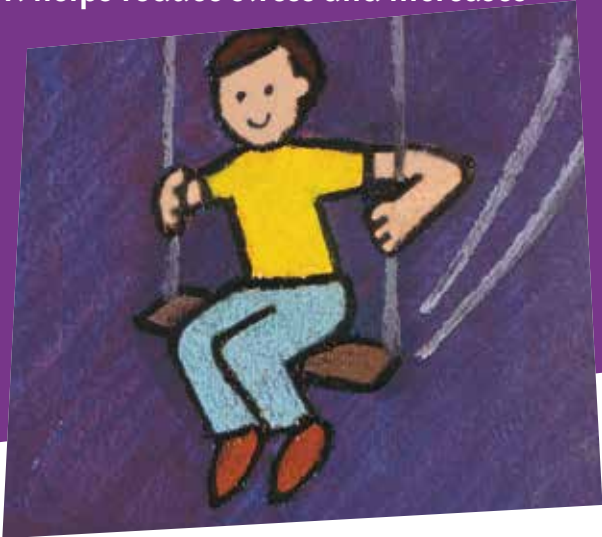
ENJOYING AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE



Getting enough daily exercise is one of the key factors to a child's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, children are becoming less active as they spend more time in front of screens, like computers, mobile phones, and tablets. However, by making informed choices you can ensure your family develops healthy and active lifestyle habits.



The benefits of being active last a lifetime, from building strong bones and improving muscular strength and endurance, to maintaining a healthy weight in order to reduce health risks and improve brain health. In addition, it helps reduce stress and increases a child’s self-confidence and self-esteem. The goal is to maintain fitness through various activities that become a natural, fun, and routine part of a child’s life. Parents can help by teaching the importance of exercise, being role models through their own active lifestyle, and providing varied fitness opportunities.



Support your school and local community in providing more physical education, parks, and recreation centers for children.

★ **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES** ★

It is recommended that children two years of age and older participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity activity every day, and include 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity three to four times each week. Focus on activities that build strength, endurance, and flexibility. The following guidelines offer ideas for typically developing children, and may need to be adjusted based upon a child’s current abilities.

CHILD’S AGE	DEVELOPMENTAL ABILITIES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
2-3 years	Very interested in exploring their world through active play	Unstructured play such as running, climbing swinging, and playing in a sandbox
4-5 years	Becoming more coordinated and can participate in some organized games	Playing with balls and hoops, riding a bicycle with training wheels, dancing, running, and climbing
6-12 years	Can quickly learn new skills for individual and team sports	Organized, competitive sports such as soccer, or non-competitive activities such as dancing, jumping rope, playing hopscotch, or yoga

★ **REDUCE INACTIVITY** ★

Research has shown that digital devices can impact physical and mental health.

★ **TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME CAN BE HARMFUL**

- Children can be inactive for hours, which can lead to weight gain, chronic neck and back problems, and difficulty sleeping
- Without properly established parental filters, some programs or content may not be suitable for children
- Reduces time spent engaged in creative and imaginative play
- Children can become influenced by advertisements that promote inappropriate toys or unhealthy food choices

★ **HOW TO LIMIT SCREEN TIME**

- Set clear and consistent boundaries on the use of screen time
- Create screen-free zones, such as during meals and in bedrooms
- Use screens with your child so that you can monitor content, and avoid letting your child use technology alone

★ **FUN, FREE, FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

Staying fit doesn't have to cost a lot of money. To help your child build a healthy lifestyle, plan physical activities during family time. Some ideas include:

- Playing catch or throwing a frisbee
- Dancing to music
- Playing tag or hide-and-seek
- Joining a local community recreational group that offers classes, sports leagues, and activities
- Going on nature hikes
- Playing at local playgrounds and parks
- Visiting a beach, lake, or river
- Doing chores together such as raking leaves, vacuuming, or sweeping the floors
- Bike riding
- Going on a neighborhood walk



★ **SPORTS**

Playing sports is a great way to stay active and teach many important values. Encourage but don't force your child to participate in sports. Find out what they are interested in, and provide support

- Consider your child's size, interests, and abilities
- Expose your child to a variety of new activities and experiences
- Following rules, understanding teamwork, and coping with losing can be very difficult for younger children; reflect on whether your child is ready for such a commitment
- Make sure your child has a thorough physical exam by their pediatrician before beginning any sport
- Keep realistic goals for yourself and your child
- Try to attend your child's games or meets to show your support
- Get to know your child's coach or become a coach or assistant coach yourself
- If your child is not interested in team sports, individual sports like swimming, tennis, martial arts, or dancing may be good alternatives



★ **SAFETY**

- Stretch before and after exercising to help prevent muscle strains
- Always wear the proper equipment for an activity; for example, helmets, elbow pads, kneepads, goggles, and protective padding
- Follow the Talk/Sing Rule: If children are breathing too heavily to be able to sing, but are still able to talk, they are probably exercising at the right level of intensity
- Teach your child to stop exercising if they feel pain or nausea, are faint or dizzy, or have difficulty breathing
- Wear protective sun gear when playing outdoors, such as a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen
- Constantly supervise your child during any water activity. Children can drown in as little as 4 cm (1½ inches) of water

★ **OBESITY**

Approximately 1 in 5 US children and adolescents are obese (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024.). Obesity is defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile for age and gender. Consult your pediatrician if you have questions or concerns about how to support your child in maintaining a healthy body weight.

CAUSES OF OBESITY	HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD
Lack of physical activity; eating more calories than the amount being used	Create plenty of fun opportunities for your child to run and actively play. After meals, offer fresh fruit rather than sugary desserts
Eating high calorie processed foods	Prepare fresh, well-balanced meals. Avoid sodas and high calorie foods like candy, cookies, and chips by having healthy snacks ready to go
Not getting enough sleep. Research has shown a link between poor sleep and a high Body Mass Index (BMI). Regularly getting less than 7 hours of sleep per night can affect the hormone that controls hunger urges	Create a bedtime routine for your child that helps promote a good night's sleep, such as a bath, brushing teeth, and reading a book together in bed
Parents who model poor eating habits and don't exercise	Set the same food and exercise habits for everyone in the family. Children will copy what you do

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN ABC YOGA Christiane Engel	WEBSITES HEALTHY CHILDREN www.healthychildren.org
OH, THE THINGS YOU CAN DO THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU! ALL ABOUT STAYING HEALTHY Tish Rabe	KIDSHEALTH www.kidshealth.org
THE BUSY BOOK Lizzy Rockwell	AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS www.aap.org