

Physical Activity in Child Care Centers

More Than Child's Play

Young children need to be physically active.

Active play time promotes social, mental and physical development, keeps children's bodies and brains healthy and prepares children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and "gets the wiggles out!"

TIPS to increase physical activity

- **Add activity breaks** into daily routines, like circle time.
- **Get kids active between lessons.** Even a five to ten minute burst of activity can help.
- **Avoid having kids stay seated for a long time.** Have children get up and move every 15 minutes.
- **Use physical activity** to help teach your lesson plans.
- **Include teacher-guided activities.** Introduce simple movement games and songs like "Simon Says," "Follow the Leader" and "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes."
- **Encourage children** to stay engaged in active play.
- **Offer different types of portable play equipment** to keep children interested in active play.
- **Set written policies and procedures** that describe your center's daily physical activity plans.
- **Limit or remove children's screen time**, including television, DVDs, computer and video games.

IDEAS to overcome common challenges

WEATHER

- Ask parents to dress children in appropriate clothing and shoes for active, outdoor play.
- Stock spare clothes, boots, hats and gloves.
- Have parents pack a change of clothes for water play during summer months.
- Schedule outdoor play during the coolest time of day in the summer.
- Take a nature walk or neighborhood tour when the grass or playground equipment is wet or covered in snow.

SPACE

- Create an open space inside for play or dance by moving tables, chairs and toys aside.
- Use hallways for activities like hopscotch.
- Move activities outdoors! Most indoor games can be played outside too.



EQUIPMENT

- Stock inexpensive options like beach balls, tunnels, bean bags, ribbon sticks, scarves and hula hoops.
- Encourage children to use their imagination and find new uses for objects.
- Set up an obstacle course using unlikely objects. Kids can push chairs across the room, crawl under tables or jump over blocks.

Find more ideas:

Sesame Street's *We Have The Moves*: <http://bit.ly/1ILqAAi>



IDEAS to overcome common challenges – continued

TRAINING

- Host an in-person training or workshop for teachers.
- Distribute a resource guide for teachers with games and ideas to get started.
- Ask teachers to share their favorite way to get kids moving. Create a “Strategy Swap Activity Book.”
- Learn about appropriate options to accommodate a range of ages and children with special needs.

Find more ideas:

Department of Early Learning

<http://1.usa.gov/1LqEzV>

Let's Move! Child Care

<http://bit.ly/1LqJDJ>

Best Practices for Physical Activity

<http://bit.ly/1LqMQ3>

HOW Washington State Child Care Centers stack up to national best practices

Percent of Child Care Centers that meet these best practices:



8%

Best practice:

Preschoolers get adult-led physical activity for **60 minutes** or more per day (over the course of a day)

12%

Preschoolers (children ages 3–5) get **120 minutes** or more of physical activity each day

22%

Children ages 2–5 play outside **90 minutes** or more each day

26%

Two-year-olds get **90 minutes** or more of physical activity each day

33%

Staff verbally encourage physical activity and often join in during physically active play time



About the survey

In 2013, University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition surveyed all licensed Child Care Centers in the state that care for children ages two to five years old. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about the nutrition, physical activity and screen time practices of these programs. Overall, 46 percent of centers completed the survey (692 out of 1,522 centers). The full report is available at: <http://depts.washington.edu/uwcphn/work/ece/waccsurvey.shtml>