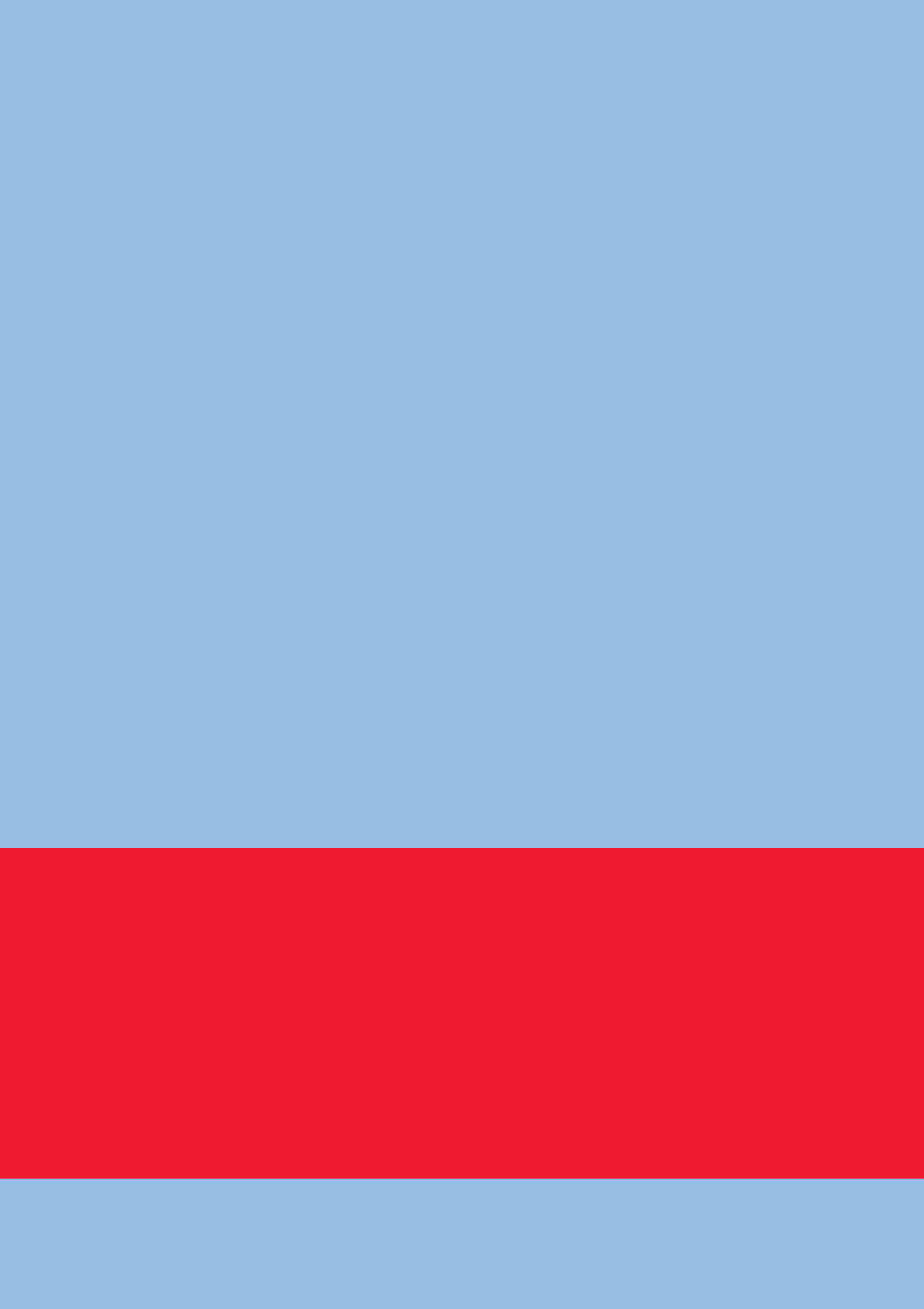




Get kids on the go!



British Heart
Foundation





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Why should you encourage your child to be active?

As a parent you want your child to be healthy and happy. Frequent physical activity can help by:

- improving health – physical activity can help build a healthy heart, develop strong muscles and bones and may help reduce the risk of some chronic diseases in later life
 - reducing body fat – the number of young people in the UK who are obese (severely overweight) is increasing and obesity can have a significant effect on health, including the development of diabetes
 - reducing anxiety and stress
 - helping your child feel good about themselves
 - improving social and moral development
 - increasing opportunities for your child to mix with others and make friends.
-



Physical activity can help your child build a healthy heart and develop strong muscles and bones.

Positive experiences of physical activity in childhood and adolescence will also lay valuable foundations for lifelong participation.

If your child is to enjoy all the benefits of activity, they need to be active at home and during their leisure time as well as at school – most schools do not have time to provide all of the daily activity your child needs.

This is where you can help – read on and find out how.



How much activity should your child do?

To improve health, it is recommended that:

“children and young people should aim to participate in activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour every day”

If your child is only taking part in a little activity at the moment, they should build up to this level gradually, starting with an initial target of 30 minutes.

The one hour of activity doesn't all have to be done at once – it can be built up over the day through, for example, four 15 minute periods of activity, three 20 minutes or two 30 minutes. This could include walking to and from school, PE lessons, active play with friends at breaktimes and out of school, sport, or structured exercise.

The one hour of activity doesn't have to be done all at once.

Examples of moderate intensity activities include:

-
- brisk walking
 - active play
 - swimming
 - cycling
 - dance
 - most sports
 - games
-



It is also recommended that:

“at least twice a week, some activities should help to enhance and maintain muscular strength and flexibility and bone health.”

For children of primary school age this could include:

-
- climbing
 - jumping
 - skipping
 - gymnastics
-



Is your child doing enough activity outside of school PE lessons?



Does your child watch less than 3½ hours television each day?

Yes No

Does your child walk or cycle to school?

Yes No

Does your child play outside most days?

Yes No

Does your child take part in organised sport or recreational activities either at school, as part of after-school clubs or in the local community?

Yes No

Do you take part in activity as a family group (eg walking, swimming or playing active games)?

Yes No

All YES answers.

It is likely that your child is already participating in enough activity outside of school. Encourage them to keep up the good work!

All NO answers.

Your child is almost certainly not taking part in enough activity outside of school. Don't worry, the rest of this booklet will give you advice on how you can encourage them to do a little more – build up gradually, don't expect them to make big changes overnight!

A mixture of YES and NO answers.

Your child may not be enjoying all the benefits of an active lifestyle. If they are not participating in 30-60 minutes activity most days of the week, consider ways in which they could do more – the rest of this booklet will help.



What can you do to help?

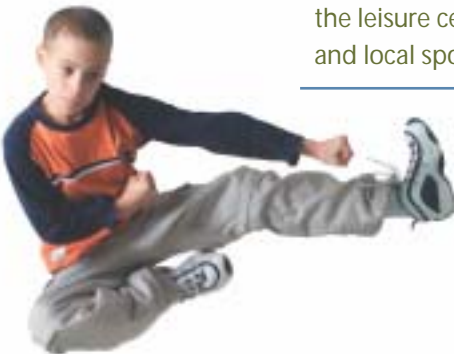
1. Encourage your child to participate in PE lessons

Only write notes for missing PE lessons when this is absolutely necessary due to medical reasons. If your child has specific needs for PE (eg if they have asthma) discuss these with their PE teacher. Most of these can be overcome if sensible precautions are taken.

2. Give your child opportunities to be active

Look for opportunities for your child to be more active and encourage them to take advantage of some of these:

-
- **as part of their everyday routine**
eg walking to school, playing outside rather than watching TV
 - **through informal activity in their leisure time**
eg cycling, roller-blading, dancing to music at home, having a kick-around etc with friends, going to the leisure centre for a swim
 - **through taking part in specific activity sessions in their leisure time**
eg after-school activity sports clubs (ask your children's teacher what is on offer), activities at the leisure centre, at local community centres and local sports clubs.
-



3. Help your child to practise basic skills

Give your child a chance to practise skills such as running, jumping, throwing, catching and kicking, either with you or with friends. Providing a few basic pieces of equipment such as balls and skipping ropes can help to encourage them. Being more competent at these basic skills will increase their confidence and enjoyment when participating in many physical activities and games – but don't forget, learning a new skill can take time.

4. Encourage your child

Praise and encourage your child when they are taking part in an activity, particularly when they are learning a new skill. Keep your feedback positive and don't push too hard. Young people will only continue participation in an activity if they enjoy the experience. Make sure competitive activities put winning into perspective.

5. Participate in activities together

Try and do some activity as a family eg walking/ hiking, cycling, swimming, playing tennis. This will help children to develop a positive attitude about physical activity.

6. Be a role model

Children learn by watching what their parents do. Show your child that you enjoy and value activity by taking part yourself. Even simple things like walking short journeys instead of using the car can have a big influence.



Being more competent at basic skills will increase their confidence and enjoyment.

Tips and tools for encouraging your child to be active



Think of ways to increase the amount of incidental activity your child does. Small changes can make a significant difference over time.

Ask your child what activities they like doing. Help and encourage them to follow their interests. Make physical activity a treat.

Encourage your child to play games with others (friends, brothers, sisters). Children of primary school age often prefer doing activity with others.

Think of active alternatives when your child says 'I'm bored':

Encourage your child to try activities which are not high profile (ie unlikely to be in school or on TV). Cycling, walking, swimming, dancing and roller skating are all fun activities which your child could continue doing when they leave school.

Think of ways to increase the amount of incidental activity your child does. Small changes can make a significant difference over time eg if you have an upstairs and downstairs toilet at home, encourage your child to use the upstairs toilet; hide the remote control for the TV (only use it if it is to look at teletext); always try to use the stairs instead of lifts and escalators and if you do have to use an escalator, don't just stand still on it, walk up/down; if you have to use the car to go shopping, park further away from the shops, not in the space right next to the door!

Always take precautions to ensure your child's safety when being active. Make sure they wear any necessary protective equipment eg cycle helmet;

check the area in which they are playing is safe; and ensure they have adequate supervision (this is important, but if possible, do try and let your child practise some independence).

Provide basic pieces of sports equipment eg balls, skipping rope, tennis racquet. Let the children organise their own activities.

Encourage your child to keep a record of all the activity they do. The British Heart Foundation's colourful Pocket Play Pack is ideal for this – not only does it provide charts for your child to record their activity over six weeks (with a certificate for their achievement), but it also suggests some activity they may like to try. See page 20 to find out how you can order a free Pocket Play Pack.

Teach your child how to ride a bicycle. Ensure they wear a helmet, know the rules of the road and have a roadworthy bike.

Show your child how to do household chores. Think of ones that involve moving around, eg helping in the garden, or washing the car.

Enrol your child in an activity club. Make sure they are involved in making the decision.

Find a safe area for them to play. Perhaps in the garden, if it is big enough, or at the local park with adults taking it in turns to supervise.

Ensure your child wears a helmet, knows the rules of the road and has a roadworthy bike.



Encouraging activity at home

There are lots of ways your child can be active in and around the home, and many of them are great ways for you and your child to be active together.

- Put some music on or an appropriate music video and encourage your child to dance. Even better dance with them!
 - Ask your child to help you with specific household chores eg clear out their bedroom together.
 - Encourage your child to be independent as young as possible eg ask them to make their own bed, get themselves drinks and tidy up after themselves.
 - Walk with your child to the local shop or postbox.
 - Walk with your child to and from school.
 - Make it a family ritual to go for a walk after dinner.
 - Set 'rules' on the amount of time your child can spend watching television and playing video and computer games.
 - Provide softballs and indoor equipment to allow your child to create games and be active inside.
 - Spend time playing active games with your child in the house and garden eg 'chase', hide-and-seek, hopscotch or skipping.
-

Make it a family ritual to go for a walk after dinner.



Try to include at least one of these activities each day.

Encouraging activity in leisure time

Children have lots of 'free' time after school, at weekends and during school holidays. These provide ideal opportunities for your child to do activity.

-
- Encourage your child to spend more time outdoors – let them invite friends over to play.
 - Talk to parents of other local children and arrange games in the local park or time in the playground. Take it in turns to supervise.
 - Make a kite with your child and fly it together.
 - Check what after-school clubs are available at your child's school and encourage them to try one.
 - Visit your local community centre and leisure centre and check local papers to see what clubs and activities are available for your child to join. Encourage them to try one – getting one of their friends to go along too will probably help.
 - Go out for a walk or cycle at the weekend with your child or go for a swim at the local pool.
 - If there are not many opportunities or facilities for children to be active in your local area, encourage the local council or parish council to do something about it.
 - During school holidays, try to provide your child with lots of opportunities to be active, either with friends or with the family.
 - Check if there are any local activity schemes being organised during the school holidays. Many schools, community centres and leisure centres now do this.
-



Arrange games in the local park or time in the playground.

Food and rest are important too!

As well as being active, it is also important that your child eats well and has adequate rest:

-
- For leaflets on healthy eating visit the BHF website bhf.org.uk or ask at your local health promotion unit.
 - Encourage your child to have breakfast before they leave for school. Set a good example by having breakfast yourself.
 - Make sure your child has at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
 - Children need to eat often especially when they are being active. Try to make sure there are nutritious snacks available – bananas are a great source of energy!
 - Try to sit down as a family for at least one meal a day. This is a great time for talking with your child about what they have been doing that day.
 - Try to make sure your child has 8-10 hours sleep each night.
 - Set a time for your child to go to bed. Try and spend a little time reading with them before they go to bed. This will help them unwind and improve their reading.
-

Try to sit down as a family for at least one meal a day.



Choosing the right activities for your child

- Children should try a variety of activities as they are more likely to find a few that they enjoy.
 - Ask your child what activities they enjoy and why. This will help you to suggest other similar activities they might like to try.
 - Don't let your child's activity choices be limited by gender stereotypes.
 - Consider what activities are available locally and how convenient these are.
 - Check the costs of activities. Does your child need special clothing and equipment? How much will each activity session cost?
 - Focus on fun and skill development – children say these are important things that motivate them.
 - Make sure that the activities your child does will provide realistic challenges which match their skill and development levels.
 - Make sure competitive activities put winning into perspective. Most children like to compete and try to win, but it is important that your child realises that winning is not always possible.
 - If your child loses interest in one activity, encourage them to try something different.
-



Don't let your child's activity choices be limited by gender stereotypes.

How good are your child's activity leaders and coaches?

If your child is taking part in organised activities or sports outside of school, it is important to check that their leader or coach:

-
- has a recognised certificate or qualification from a relevant organisation
 - has undergone a check by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). The individual or their club/employers should have a document to show this has been done
 - is running an activity session which is endorsed by a respected organisation in the community.
-



Other things to look out for include whether the leader/coach:

-
- adjusts activities to match different age groups and children's differing needs and abilities eg uses appropriate small-sided games
 - encourages fun and participation and where appropriate, includes the right amount of competition rather than focusing on winning at all costs
 - ensures a safe playing environment – a play area free from hazards, and the use of appropriate protective equipment
 - promotes fair play and sporting behaviour
 - provides your child with opportunities to try and practise new skills
 - provides your child with the chance to try new positions or activities.
-

If you have any concerns, discuss this with the leader/coach, club or organisation.

For further information contact The Sports Coach UK.
Telephone 0113 774 4802.
Website: www.sportscoachuk.org



Check whether the leader or coach ensures a safe playing environment.

What if your child has a disability?

The benefits of physical activity for children with a disability can be even greater than for other children so it is important that they do not miss out. It may not be possible for them to do all activities, but in many cases all that is needed is a slight adaptation.

General guidelines for adapting activity

Equipment: larger/lighter bats or rackets; various types of ball (different sizes, weight, colour, texture); larger goals or targets; scoops for catching activities.

Playing area: decrease size; create 'level playing field' eg in tennis children with disabilities use singles courts and those with more mobility cover doubles courts.

Time: slow down the pace of a game/activity; lengthen the time allowed to perform tasks or remove time limits; provide frequent rest periods.

Rules/cues: modify rules eg in netball extend the three second rule to six seconds; reduce/simplify rules; use oral prompts.



Some other guidelines are listed below:

-
- Be patient – and encourage them with praise for any progress.
 - When doing activities with other children explain why your child may have to do things slightly differently.
 - Try not to be overprotective. If you are worried about what they should be allowed to do, check with their doctor.
 - To take part in an organised activity/sport, arrange to meet the leader/coach to discuss your child's particular needs and capabilities.
-

For further information contact the relevant country's disability sports office. See page 19 for details.

Photographs by kind permission of the English Federation of Disability Sport.



Be patient – and encourage them with praise for any progress.

Who can you ask for help?

If you would like advice on helping your child to be more active, here are some organisations you could contact:

Sport England

3rd floor
Victoria House
Bloomsbury Square
London WC1B 4SE
Tel: 08458 508 508
www.sportengland.org

English Federation of Disability Sport

Manchester Metropolitan University
Alsager Campus
Hassall Road
Alsager ST7 2HL
Tel: 0161 247 5294
www.efds.co.uk

Sport Scotland

Caledonia House
South Gyle
Edinburgh EH12 9DQ
Tel: 0131 317 7200
www.sportscotland.org.uk

Scottish Disability Sport

Caledonia House
South Gyle
Edinburgh EH12 9DQ
Tel: 0131 317 1130
www.scottishdisabilitysport.com

Sports Council for Wales

Sophia Gardens
Cardiff CF11 9SW
Tel: 029 2030 0500
www.sports-council-wales.co.uk

Disability Sports NI

Unit 10
Ormeau Business Park
8 Cromac Avenue
Belfast BT7 2JA
Tel: 028 9050 8255
www.dsni.co.uk

Sports Council for Northern Ireland

House of Sport
Upper Malone Road
Belfast BT9 5LA
Tel: 028 9038 1222
www.sportni.org

Sport Disability Cymru

Welsh Institute of Sport
Sophia Gardens
Cardiff CF11 9SW
Tel: 029 2030 0525 / 0526
www.disability-sport-cymru.co.uk

At school

If you have any questions about the kinds of activity your child receives at school, contact the PE Coordinator, Headteacher or Governors.

Local organisations

For information on activities available in your local area contact the leisure and recreation department at your local council. Also check local community centres, leisure centres, the library, your local health promotion unit and local newspapers for information.

Useful websites

These ones are child-friendly and could provide more information on physical activity:

www.cbhf.net (under 11 years)

www.yheart.net (over 11 years)

www.nrgize.co.uk

www.welltown.gov.uk (5-7 years)

www.galaxy-h.gov.uk (7-11 years)

www.lifebytes.gov.uk (11-14 years)

www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk (14-18 years)

British Heart Foundation (BHF)

To order BHF materials:

G66 Kids' and schools' catalogue

G5 Publications and videos catalogue (for adults and health professionals)

G79 Pocket play pack (7-11 years)

G80 Get kids on the go!

G80/w Get kids on the go! Welsh/English version

G48B Artie Beat club (7-11 years)

Tel: **01604 640016** and quote the order codes.

British Heart Foundation

14 Fitzhardinge Street

London W1H 6DH

Phone: 020 7935 0185

Website: bhf.org.uk

Heart Information Line • 08450 70 80 70
a local rate number