

Exercise for Younger Children

Physical activity for children in the form of play and movement are important for developing motor control, physical competencies and confidence. Exercise does not have to be competitive. As long as kids exercise within their limits and not overdoing it, they will gain the benefits of an active lifestyle. Their childhood is a critical time for developing healthy attitudes and behavioral patterns, as those that are active at a young age tend to maintain healthy habits later in life.



In Hong Kong



In Hong Kong, a recent population survey showed that over 90% of school-aged children and youth did not participate in sufficient physical activity. The Child Health Survey (2005-06) of the Department of Health showed that excluding physical education at school, only 16% of children were engaged in adequate amounts of physical activity every day.

Why Can Exercise Help?



Exercise during youth can lower the risk of cancer, obesity and stroke later in life. Research has shown that those who developed good motor skills in early childhood will have more active engagement in physical activity during adulthood. Research also shows that physical activity has a positive effect on learning.

Recommendations

Pre School Children



Any physical activity for a total of 3 hours each day at a variety of intensities: light, moderate or vigorous



Limit the recreational screen time to no more than 1 hour per day

Primary School Children



60mins of activity per day. This should include moderate and vigorous exercises for their heart (aerobic), muscles & bones



Limit the recreational screen time to no more than 2 hours per day

Aerobic Exercise Examples:

Light Intensity	Walking, playing toys, grooming, packing school bag
Moderate Intensity	Brisk walking, biking, swimming, catch and throw games
Vigorous Intensity	Running, soccer, basketball, football, jump rope, dancing

Strength Exercise Examples:

For muscles	Resistance training (supervised), climbing, wrestling
For bone	Hopping, skipping, jumping

Tips for Getting Started

- Physical activity should be FUN and something they want to do on their own. If they love it they'll do it more! Find activities they can do with their friends.
- Be a role model. Active parents = active kids. Give plenty of encouragement to create positive experiences that develop a sense of achievement and self confidence.

References

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