
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Exercise and academic success: Active children do better in school



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Marcia Latta, communications consultant, from an article published by CommonSenseMedia.org.

Numerous studies have linked physical activity with better school performance. Research cited on WebMD.com attributes the mind/body connection to increased blood and oxygen flow during physical activity that enhances brain function and triggers the release of “feel-good” endorphin hormones.

Other benefits for students who participate regularly in sports activities include better classroom concentration, more energy, greater confidence and improved sleep habits.

Help your child stay active

Physical activity is essential to children's health. But how do you ensure that your child gets enough activity? Experts recommend that children get at least 60 minutes of activity every day. With homework, television and computer games competing for your child's time, getting enough exercise takes guidance and planning.

How much and what kind of activity?

The Department of Health and Human Services suggests these guidelines: Children and adolescents age 6 and older need at least an hour a day of physical activity. Most of the hour should be either moderate or vigorous aerobic activity. In addition, children should participate in muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activities at least three days a week. Classic activities such as playing on playground equipment and jumping rope meet all of these needs at once.

Help your child move more

Here are some tips from the Mayo Clinic to help your kids build healthy habits for lifelong health:

- **Set a good example.** Model an active lifestyle for your child. Make physical activity a priority for yourself or, even better, make it a family goal. Good activities include playing catch or taking a walk or hike. Make sure to praise and encourage your child. Being active should be fun.
- **Limit screen time.** The more time children spend in front of a television, computer or video game console, the less time they spend moving their bodies. Set time limits on screen time, don't place a TV in their bedrooms, and turn it off during meal times. Video games aren't all bad. If your child likes gaming, choose active games that require movement, such as dancing or sports games.
- **Establish a routine.** Set aside daily active time for activity. Take the dog for a morning walk, or head outside before or after dinner.

- **Follow your child's lead.** Team sports are great, but they won't appeal to all children. Work activity around your child's interests: dance in the living room, take a nature walk, hop on your bikes.
- **Promote activity, not exercise.** Make fitness fun with a variety of different activities. Get the whole family involved in classic games on the lawn. Remember jumping rope, red light, green light and Simon Says? Plan an active birthday party at the roller rink or bowling alley or plan relay races at the park. Let your child choose the activity for the day or week. It doesn't matter what it is as long as it's active and fun. For more exercise ideas, Google fitness activities for kids.