

Watch kids playing on any playground. All of that running and jumping appears to be the activity that they need to stay physically fit, but while they are running, jumping and having fun, they are also getting smarter!

Exercise helps our brain learn in many ways. It improves circulation (blood and oxygen) throughout the body which includes the brain. Production of new neurons increases especially in the areas of the brain that store new memories.

Metabolism, overall mood, and ability to focus increases. Stress decreases. These changes make the brain cells more resilient and pliable thus able to link together which helps us retain new information.

The type of exercise or intensity does not matter as long as it is at least 30 minutes worth of movement such as: yoga, stretching, games, strength training, aerobics, walking, etc.



Regular physical activity can help ward off high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and diabetes. All of these can lead to dementia in older adults. Developing sound exercise habits as a child can decrease Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in adults by 30-40%.

Even light activity during the school or work day, at lunch, during recess, in physical education class, after school sports, etc. can improve: time management skills, the ability to meet deadlines, levels of personal satisfaction, overall performance, the ability to handle pressure and stress, and not losing one's temper. It can also lessen the common feeling of mid-afternoon fatigue and depression.



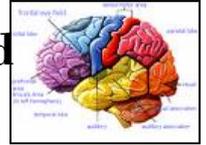
Additional Benefits of Exercise

- √Builds & maintains healthy bones & muscles
- √Reduces risk of obesity & chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease & several types of cancer)
- √Builds self confidence



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How much exercise is enough?

Age	Minimum Daily Activity	Comments
Infant	No specific requirements	Physical activity should encourage motor development
Toddler	1 1/2 Hours	30 min. planned physical activity AND 60 min. unstructured physical activity (free play)
Preschooler	2 hours	60 min. planned physical activity AND 60 min. unstructured physical activity (free play)
School-age Kids & Teens	1 hour or more	Can be broken up into bouts of 15 minutes or more

▣ Activity recommendations for children according to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) ▣

PLAY

If you have ever watched children on a playground, you have seen the three elements of fitness in action. Children should be encouraged to do a variety of activities so they can work on all three elements.

TIME

3 Elements of Fitness

Courtesy of KidsHealth.org



Endurance

"runs away from the kid that's 'it' "

Endurance is developed when someone regularly engages in aerobic activity (aerobic means with oxygen). During aerobic exercise, the heart beats faster and a person breathes harder. When done regularly and for continuous periods of time, aerobic activity strengthens the heart and improves the body's ability to deliver oxygen to all of its cells.



Strength

"crosses the monkey bars"

Improving strength doesn't have to mean lifting weights. Although some children benefit from lifting weights, it should be done under the supervision of a fitness professional experienced with kids. Most kids don't need a formal weight training program to be strong. Push-ups, stomach crunches, pull ups, and other basic exercises help tone and strengthen muscles. Children also incorporate strength activities in their play when they climb, do a handstand, or wrestle.



Flexibility

"bends down to tie his or her shoes"

Stretching exercises help improve flexibility, allowing muscles and joints to bend and move easily throughout their full range of motion. Kids get opportunities everyday to stretch when they try to get a toy just out of reach, practice a split, or flip over a couch.



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