



INFORMATION SHEET

How much physical activity is enough?

It is often difficult to know exactly how much physical activity is necessary for children and youth. Here are some guidelines for physical activity to help you work through this issue. These are based on the latest research.

Guideline 1

All people should engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity of moderate intensity each day. The 30 minutes do not have to be continuous but may be accumulated over a number of sessions.

All children and youth should be physically active daily, or nearly every day, as part of play, games, sports, work, transportation, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of the family, school and community activities.

(NSW Health, 1996)

The minimum amount of exercise per day to achieve health benefits is 30 minutes. The activity does not have to be vigorous. Brisk walking is sufficient. The 30 minutes can be accumulated, but sessions should last at least 10 minutes.

Children and youth should do a variety of physical activities as part of their daily lifestyles. These activities should be enjoyable, involve a variety of muscle

groups and include some weight-bearing activities. Children and youth should be encouraged to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyles by doing such things as walking up stairs, walking or riding a bicycle for errands, walking while having conversations with friends, and completing household tasks which involve physical activity.

Guideline 2

In addition to the above guideline, children and youth should engage in three or more sessions per week of activities that last 20 minutes or more at a time and that require moderate to vigorous levels of exertion.

(Sallis and Patrick, 1994)

Moderate to vigorous activities are those that require at least as much effort as brisk or fast walking. There is evidence that regular participation in continuous moderate to vigorous physical activity during adolescence enhances psychological health, increases HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol) and increases cardio-respiratory fitness. It is not known whether more frequent, shorter sessions of physical activity would provide some of the same benefits.



Guideline 3

Children need to develop fundamental motor skills in order to have the confidence to participate in physical activity throughout life.

(Sallis and Patrick, 1994)

Research shows that children who do not learn the basic skills (e.g. running, throwing, catching and jumping) are more likely to drop out of physical activity. Many girls, in particular, often indicate that one of the reasons they don't continue with physical activity is that they don't feel they have the skills or confidence. Childhood is the best time to learn skills. Some of the time spent being active in school PDHPE and sport needs to be focused on motor skill development.

Putting the guidelines into practice in your school

To achieve health benefits and develop motor skills in children and youth, schools should aim to provide:

- ✧ planned physical education lessons as part of PDHPE each week, for example, 3 x 20-minute sessions each week. PE lessons should aim to get students "active" for the majority of lesson time and focus on skill development.
- ✧ 60 minutes of further activity per week. This could include the sport afternoon for Years 3-6 or 2 x 30-minute sessions on motor skills for K-2 students.
- ✧ whole-school opportunities to promote and maximise involvement in physical activity, for example, planned lunchtime activities or other school-based initiatives.