GET UP & GROW

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

STAFF AND CARER BOOK

Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Minister's Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings*, an initiative that is an important element of the Australian Government's *Plan for Early Childhood* and *Plan for Tackling Obesity*.

Our children's early years are arguably their most important and establishing healthy behaviours from birth will lay the foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. Nutritious food and regular physical activity supports the normal growth and development of children and reduces the risk of developing chronic lifestyle related diseases later in life.

As more children spend time in care, early childhood settings can play an important part in supporting healthy choices around nutrition and physical activity. This resource provides practical information and advice to assist practitioners, carers and families in this role.

The *guidelines* have been designed so that they can be applied in a variety of early childhood settings including centre-based care, family day care and preschools. They are evidence-based and consistent with current thinking on early childhood development.

They will also complement a range of other programs such as the Healthy Kids Check for all four-year-olds before they start school and resources such as the *Get Set 4 Life – habits for healthy kids* Guide.

These initiatives will help to ensure that all Australian children have the best possible start in life and every opportunity for the future.

The Hon Nicola Roxon
Minister for Health and Ageing

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'I'm still hungry'

It is important to have extra food available if a child is still hungry. Extra servings of the main meal or a part of the main meal can be offered, if available. If not available, offer a small piece of fruit or a couple of crackers.

Children's appetites vary from day to day, but if a child always appears hungry at the end of meals, discuss this with the director and with the child's family.

HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINE

Offer meals and snacks at regular and predictable intervals.

Establishing good mealtime routines in childhood helps with maintaining a regular meal pattern throughout adolescence and adulthood. A regular meal pattern forms the foundation for a healthy, balanced diet. Children have small stomachs, and their energy and nutrient requirements are best met through small and frequent nutritious meals and snacks.

Providing meals at regular, predictable intervals

Offering regular opportunities to eat fits the concept of dividing the responsibilities of eating, which aims to encourage children to learn to regulate their own appetites. A child can be confident about eating or declining food when they know that food will be offered again at a predictable time. Also, adults are often more comfortable with children declining food or eating less when they know there are not long periods between opportunities to eat. Snacks are just as important as meals to children's nutrition. Young children can only eat so much at mealtimes, and they need regular opportunities to eat in order to maintain energy levels and achieve a healthy intake of nutrients over the day. Three meals and two snacks a day are ideal for young children. Children who will not have an evening meal until very late may need a small snack late in the afternoon.

Snacks should contribute nutrients in proportion to their energy value. Some snacks, or 'discretionary choices', provide energy (kilojoules) without contributing enough nutrients. These are not good snacks for children and should not be offered.

'Three meals and two snacks a day are ideal for young children.'

Most foods offered as meals can also be offered as snacks. The most commonly provided suitable snacks include bread, cereals, fruit, vegetables and milk-based drinks. Snacks do not have to be large – one or two crackers with cheese, a small piece of fruit, steamed vegetable sticks with dip or a small glass of fruit smoothie are examples of good snacks. Make sure water is also available at all times.

There can be some flexibility when it comes to snack times, to allow children to finish an activity. Alternatively, snacks can be available over a period of time if it suits the setting. Children who become too hungry will often become irritable as a result. However, constant grazing gets in the way of children learning to recognise hunger and knowing to eat in response to hunger.

Breakfast

Breakfast is an important meal for a number of reasons:

- Without the nutritional contribution of breakfast, it is very difficult to consume enough nutrients during the day.
- Missing breakfast leads to hunger later, and often results in eating less nutritious snack foods that are available at the time.
- Eating breakfast is an important part of establishing a healthy routine for young children, which sets the framework for later life.
- It is more likely that children who do not eat breakfast will be overweight or obese, usually due to a combination of reasons.

Breakfast can be simple, nutritious and easy. For example, wholegrain cereal with milk and fruit is a simple but nutritious meal, and the ingredients are easy to keep on hand.

Other healthy breakfast options include:

- porridge and fruit
- yoghurt and fruit, or a fruit smoothie
- cheese on toast and slices of fruit
- pikelets topped with ricotta cheese and fruit.

Choosing simple breakfast options means that you don't have to go to a lot of trouble to prepare breakfast, especially during busy times.

Children will find it harder to manage their own behaviour and enjoy their day if they start off hungry.

For many different reasons, children may occasionally arrive without having eaten breakfast. If this occurs regularly, discuss the reasons and some possible solutions with a parent. Often parents who do not themselves have breakfast may not see it as being important for their child. Alternatively, the child may be very slow getting ready in the morning, leaving no time for breakfast.

'…consider offering breakfast at the setting.'

If a number of children arrive regularly without breakfast, and if it seems that the problem is the food supply at home, consider offering breakfast at the setting. If you do not offer breakfast, have something available to give to children who arrive without breakfast.

Celebration food

Birthdays and other special occasions are important to young children and their families. In many cultures, special occasions are celebrated with food. To promote healthy eating, use nutritious foods prepared and presented in special ways, rather than relying on 'discretionary choices' for celebrations. If food is brought in for special occasions, encourage parents to choose nutritious foods.

If discretionary choices *are* used for special occasions, offer small, children's serves and consider also offering a fruit platter or other healthy option .

When parents provide food to share in the setting, ask that the food is in its original packaging, and includes a list of ingredients and use-by date. In settings where children have food allergies, non-food celebrations will be more appropriate.

Celebrations do not have to focus on food – there are other ways to celebrate. For example, on birthdays, children can wear a special party hat or a birthday badge or sticker. The group can sing 'Happy Birthday' and the birthday child can blow out a candle. Other occasions can be celebrated through art or craft activities where children paint, draw or make something, dress up or decorate in a special way.

'Celebrations do not have to focus on food…'

Food safety

HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINE

Ensure that food is safely prepared for children to eat – from the preparation stages to consumption.

Food safety is a critically important consideration in early childhood settings. It includes managing any possible risk of children choking on food, avoiding both allergic reactions and intolerant or sensitive reactions to food, and ensuring that food is not contaminated.

Allergies and intolerances

Children may have an adverse reaction to eating particular foods. Many people in the community refer to food intolerance as a food allergy. This can be confusing as food intolerance is far less severe than an allergy. How each should be managed in the individual childcare settings is different. It is important that centre staff know the difference between food allergy and food intolerance.

Food allergies

Food allergies can be life threatening. They are caused by a reaction of the immune system to a protein in a food. The most common sources of food allergy in children under five are cow's milk, soy, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, sesame, fish and shellfish. Food allergy occurs in around one in 20 children, and some of these allergies are severe.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction are usually immediate and can include hives or a rash on the skin; swelling of the lips, tongue or mouth; vomiting; diarrhoea; or difficulty breathing. Severe cases of allergic reaction can lead to an anaphylactic reaction, where breathing becomes extremely difficult. This can cause loss of consciousness, severe injury or even death.

When children have a severe food allergy, it is likely that parents will already have an allergy management plan that has been developed with their doctor. Individual allergy management plans must be developed in your setting for children with severe food allergies. Refer to the Australasian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) website at www.allergy.org.au for information on allergy management plans.

Ensuring that children avoid exposure to food they are allergic to is the only management for food allergies. This means avoiding exposure at all times, including mealtimes and during cooking and craft activities. Close supervision of children with food allergies is required, especially at meal and snack times.

Everyone working with children needs to be aware of the early symptoms of a food allergy, and must be trained in managing allergic reactions. Every setting should have its own allergy management policy, in addition to individual allergy management plans. Check the local requirements in your state or territory regarding training and allergy management.

Food provided by the setting

Ensure that safe, allergen-free foods are provided to children with allergies. Any meals provided in a setting must not include foods to which particular children are allergic. Children should be discouraged from sharing food at all meal and snack times. Some parents of children with allergies may choose to always send meals for their child.

Some settings may decide to completely exclude certain foods from the setting. This is only to be considered with the written recommendation of a medical professional.

Food brought from home

Discourage children from swapping or sharing food. If a child attending the setting has a severe allergy, a medical professional may recommend introducing a policy that prohibits any food containing that particular allergen from being in the setting at any time. For example, if a child has a peanut allergy, the policy may be that no peanuts or peanut pastes are allowed in the setting at any time. Whether certain policy points are suitable or not depends on the types and numbers of foods that need to be avoided, the severity of the child's allergy and the possible nutritional impact on other children.

Food intolerance

Reactions due to food intolerance are usually less severe than those of food allergy. A larger dose of food is usually required to cause a reaction from food intolerance. Symptoms of food intolerance can include headaches, skin rashes and stomach upsets. Work with parents to develop a plan to manage a child's food intolerance – this may include minimising the child's exposure to particular foods.

Choking risks for toddlers and young children

Children have small airways, and when food is inhaled or ingested it can easily lead to a blockage of the airway. Children should sit down whenever they are eating, and must always be supervised. Hard, small, round and/or sticky solid foods are not recommended because they can cause choking and aspiration.

Some food items pose a greater choking risk to young children, and extra care should be taken with these foods. These include:

- hard food that can break into smaller lumps or pieces
- raw carrots, celery and apple pieces, which should be grated, finely sliced, cooked or mashed to prevent choking
- nuts, seeds and popcorn
- tough or chewy pieces of meat
- sausages and hot dogs, which should be either skinless or have the skin removed, and be cut into small pieces.

Hard lollies and corn chips also present a choking risk, but these should not be offered in the setting as they are discretionary choices.

Food hygiene

Contamination in food can include:

- foreign bodies – hair, pieces of metal or other objects accidentally picked up during the preparation and cooking process
- chemicals from the food production process, or cleaning materials
- natural contaminants, such as toxins
- contamination from pests
- bacteria.

Children are particularly at risk of illnesses caused by food-borne organisms because of their less mature immune systems. In early childhood settings the larger the number of children being fed the larger the risk, because it is more difficult to handle larger quantities of food safely.

Bacteria in foods

There are bacteria present in most foods. Food spoilage is often caused by bacteria, which can make food inedible and unpleasant but not necessarily harmful.

Certain bacteria, called pathogens, *are* harmful. These bacteria can cause food poisoning or gastro-enteritis, which involve nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach cramps. Different bacteria cause different illnesses – some are brief and mild, while others are more serious and may lead to dehydration and require hospitalisation. Food poisoning is especially serious in children and elderly people because their immune systems are more vulnerable and they become dehydrated more easily.

The most common cause of gastro-enteritis is viral illness passed on by contact between people, rather than through food. The common symptoms of gastro-enteritis are generally very acute and short-term. Hygiene and hand-washing are very important to limiting the spread of viral gastro-enteritis.

High-risk foods

Foods that allow the easy growth of bacteria are those that are moist and contain a lot of nutrients. These foods are called 'high-risk foods', and include milk, meat, fish and any dishes containing them. Cooked rice also allows some bacteria to grow. If these foods are left out of the refrigerator for long periods of time they will spoil, but will only cause illness when eaten if they contain harmful pathogenic bacteria. Keeping food safe for consumption relies on controlling all aspects of food handling and any food-related conditions, to ensure that bacteria cannot reproduce and grow to large numbers.

Low-risk foods

Foods unlikely to encourage bacteria growth are called 'low-risk foods', and examples include uncooked pasta and rice, and biscuits. Packaged snack foods, lollies and chocolates are also low-risk foods – but as they are also discretionary choices, should not be given to children in care. Low-risk foods can be kept for long periods of time without refrigeration. Canned food is safe while the can is still sealed, but once opened the food may become high-risk.

Most states and territories have separate legal requirements, in addition to regulations, that specifically relate to food safety. In some states and territories these may be handled by local government authorities. Some authorities will require staff and carers to undertake formal training.

Serving food safely

There are a number of steps that can be taken to ensure that food is safe, including the following:

- Be sure that all children and adults wash hands before preparing food or eating.
- Use tongs and serving spoons to serve food.
- Discard any leftover food served to the table or individual plates. Do not serve it again later.
- Cover and refrigerate any food prepared but not served from the kitchen, so that it can be served later.
- Do not reheat food that has already been reheated. For example, a curry cooked the day before and refrigerated, then reheated and served the next day in the setting cannot be reheated again and served later.
- Discard any food served to the table or a plate if not eaten within two hours. Do not serve it later.
- Do not allow children to share bowls or utensils, or eat from each other's plate or cup.
- Do not allow children to eat food dropped on the floor.

'Use tongs and serving spoons to serve food.'

Food preparation with children

- Ensure that children always wash hands before handling any food.
- Supervise children at all times while in the kitchen.
- Take care to avoid any injuries from sharp knives and hot surfaces.

Physical activity

Introduction

Currently, there are many aspects of everyday life in Australia that make it easy to be physically inactive – we rely on cars for transport, use labour-saving devices such as escalators, elevators and remote controls, and screen-based entertainment is among the most popular forms of leisure. This is a cause for concern, due to increasing evidence of a relationship between lack of physical activity and lifestyle diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

Most children find it fun to play and be active, and it is important to encourage physical activity in the early childhood years for two reasons. Firstly, early development of good habits may form a foundation for later years. Secondly, regular physical activity in early childhood can impact on immediate and long-term health outcomes.

Early childhood settings are the ideal place to develop good physical activity habits and influence the behaviours of families. Parents, staff and carers can work together to share the responsibility of making physical activity a priority both inside and outside the home.

For children under five years, active play is the best form of physical activity. Active play involves unstructured 'free' play and structured 'planned' play (both indoors and particularly outdoors), 'active transport' (such as walking to a destination, rather than driving or using a stroller) and certain everyday tasks.

The benefits of active play go beyond just the physical, and include the development of social, language and intellectual skills.

The importance of movement from birth to one year

RECOMMENDATION

For healthy development in infants (birth to 1 year), physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments – should be encouraged from birth.

From the time they are born, babies learn by interacting in a variety of ways. In particular, learning comes from how they relate to their physical, social and cultural surroundings. Giving babies daily chances to move freely helps to:

- keep their bodies and minds active
- develop their senses, often through natural curiosity
- develop good posture, strength and balance
- make them feel loved, happy and safe
- develop language and communication skills
- teach them about their body and the world around them
- encourage interaction with others.

For babies who cannot walk yet, being physically active means having daily opportunities to move around on their stomach or back in a variety of free spaces, without being constrained by wraps or clothing. It also includes practising movements such as reaching, grasping, pulling, pushing and playing with other people, objects and toys.

Babies both enjoy and thrive on interacting with people, so it is important to make time to spend with babies, including time playing with them.

Promoting movement in babies from birth to one year

Babies need a variety of play activities and environments throughout the day. Play activities that stimulate the senses also have the benefit of developing other skills.

Tummy time

Tummy time is important for strengthening head, neck and trunk muscles, and encouraging free limb movement.

Ideas for play:
Place babies on different floor surfaces – for example, rugs or mats. You can try placing toys or other appropriate objects just out of reach, for babies to reach for and try to grasp.

Getting around

Play spaces need to encourage babies to try and practise new movements, and to use large muscles for kicking, crawling and pulling themselves up to standing.

Ideas for play:
When babies become more mobile, they enjoy the challenge of making their way around different spaces. You may like to set up a tunnel for them to crawl through, or a sturdy bench for them to pull themselves up on.

(Note: Experts advise against baby walkers and baby exercise jumpers due to the risk of injury, and because evidence shows they can restrict the muscle development required for independent walking.

Sound

Noises during play help with areas of brain development linked to hearing, and can also encourage movement.

Ideas for play:
Give babies rattles or other noisy toys such as wooden spoons and saucepans to play with. You can also play music for babies to listen and move to.

Touch

Babies need to feel and hold a variety of objects, to help develop their recognition of touch.

Ideas for play:
Give babies toys and objects made from different materials, or with different textures, for them to touch and squeeze. You can try making your own – for example, scrunched-up paper inside a stocking.

Sight

Moving objects that babies can 'follow' with their eyes help to develop eye strength and encourage movement.

Ideas for play:
Read to babies from fabric or cardboard books, place them below colourful mobiles or play 'Peek-a-boo'.

Outdoor play and babies

Playing outside can help babies to learn about different surroundings and feel comfortable with the world around them. Some experiences that outside play provide include feeling grass, hearing cars and birds and looking at the sky.

Everyone should be encouraged to show, talk and sing to babies about what they see, hear or feel, to help them enjoy outdoor experiences. This could also include taking them to the park or for a walk in a stroller.

'Read to babies from fabric or cardboard books…'

Toddlers and pre-schoolers: One to five years

RECOMMENDATION

Toddlers (1 to 3 years) and pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years) should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.

The importance of movement for one- to five-year-olds

A child's job is to move freely and be active every day! The skills developed between one to five years of age range from learning to walk through to running and throwing a ball. In fact, at no other time in life will children learn so many physical skills.

Studies of children under five years of age have shown that active play helps them to:

- improve the health of their muscles, bones and heart
- develop new movement skills and imagination, and learn about their body
- build self-confidence and cope with stressful situations
- enjoy being active
- improve their communication skills, including how to solve problems and make decisions
- learn how to interact, share, take turns and care about others.

'A child's job is to move freely and be active every day!'

Active play

Young children naturally look for adventure and want to explore. The pace of activity can range from light actions (such as building or playing on the floor) through to vigorous actions (such as running or jumping). The ability and development of a child should direct what activities and play are appropriate and interesting to them. You should already know the development level of each child in your care and what they enjoy. Young children like to show off what they can already do, and be regularly challenged to try new things.

Active play includes the following:

- Unstructured 'free' play
- Structured 'planned' play
- Active transport
- Everyday physical tasks

All of these types of play should be included in your setting's program, particularly unstructured free play.

Unstructured play

Unstructured play is creative and spontaneous play that gives children the freedom to move at their own pace and decide *how* they will play, *what* they will do and *where* it will take place.

Examples of unstructured play include:

- free play in playgrounds or sandpits
- dancing to music
- imaginative play that incorporates the time of year (such as 'being a fish' in summer, or 'being a falling leaf' in autumn).

'Rough and tumble' play can sometimes be part of unstructured play, particularly for boys. Although boys may play differently to girls, both boys and girls need equal access to all play spaces and play items.

Structured play

Structured play is planned play that may take place at set times, have certain rules or need special equipment.

Examples of structured play include:

- creative movement and dancing
- action games and songs, such as 'Hokey Pokey'
- guided discovery sessions – problem-solving activities where adults prompt children to work out better ways to perform certain movements.

Active transport

Active transport involves using physical activity, such as walking, pedalling a bike or using a scooter, to travel. Families can also be encouraged to use active transport. Most young children are able to walk or pedal, even if it is just for a short time. As they get older and stronger, the distance and amount of time children walk or pedal can gradually increase. Active transport is also a good opportunity to teach children about road and pedestrian safety. Remember to supervise children when participating in active transport.

Some simple examples of children and adults using active transport include:

- parking the car further away and walking to a destination
- using a form of public transport that involves walking to and from the stops
- cutting down the amount of time spent in the pram or stroller, and encouraging children to walk instead.

‘Active transport is also a good opportunity to teach children about road and pedestrian safety.’

Everyday physical tasks

Children enjoy helping adults with many everyday physical tasks. These activities do not need to be restricted to chores, and can also include spontaneous games.

Examples of everyday physical tasks include:

- helping with the gardening
- tidying up inside and outside play spaces
- helping to set up activities and meal areas.

'...encourage children to make up their own games and activities.'

Promoting active play for one- to five-year-olds

Not all children are naturally active or creative, and some will need to be guided more than others. They may need to be shown how to enjoy using different equipment, how to try the same action as someone else or how to use music and sounds to make play more fun. At times, try to join in with children's active play – however, encourage children to make up their own games and activities.

Adults are very important in making sure children are active, and that they enjoy being active. Adults need to be confident in their ability to provide children with a range of play experiences. The positive influence of adults shouldn't be underestimated. Adults can make a lasting difference in helping children learn and grow through regular physical activity and movement.

Making the most of simple active play prompts

Regularly 'prompting' children to move in different ways helps to challenge them and constantly improve their skills. This can involve prompting children to change:

- **how** their body can move
- **where** their body can move
- **what** their body can do
- **who** they can move with.

How the body moves

Time

- ‘How fast can you…?’
- ‘Can you do that slowly?’
- ‘Can you do that fast, then slow?’

Force

- ‘Can you find something heavy?’
- ‘How lightly can you…?’
- ‘Can you hold that lightly or gently?’

Flow

- ‘And freeze!’
- ‘Can you do that wobbling?’
- ‘How smoothly can you…?’

Where the body moves

Direction and shape of movement

- ‘Can you do that forwards/backwards/sideways/downwards/upwards?’
- ‘Can you go through/over/under/around that?’

Level

- ‘How high can you…?’
- ‘Can you do that low?’

Ground pattern

- ‘Can you move in a straight/curved/wiggly/diagonal line?’

What the body can do

Shape

- ‘Can you stretch and…?’
- ‘Can you curl up and…?’
- ‘How big/small can you…?’
- ‘Can you build something tall/short/little/big/small/long/wide?’

Body support

- ‘Can you do that standing/sitting/kneeling/crouching/lying down/on your tummy/on your back?’
- ‘Can you do this with one leg? And the other leg?’

General body awareness

- ‘Can you follow your head/finger/knee?’
- ‘Can you do that with your feet up high/hands down low/arms stretched out?’
- ‘Can you do this with one leg/arm/elbow/knee? Now the other one?’

Who to move with

- ‘Can you show me how you do that?’
- ‘Can you teach Anna?’
- ‘Can you follow what Abdul is doing?’
- ‘Can you both do that together?’

Ideas for active play equipment for one- to five-year-olds

Play objects can be toys or everyday items, and should be appropriate in relation to the development of the child. Active play should encourage the use of the upper body, the lower body and the whole body, in indoor and outdoor play spaces.

Always ensure the safety of all play equipment, including any access to and storage of equipment. Remember that some objects suitable for older children may not be safe for younger children.

'Play should encourage the use of the upper body, the lower body and the whole body. '

Upper body movements

Provide objects to hold, wave, shake, bang, throw, hit or catch.

Suggestions for equipment:
Balls, pom poms, mini beanbags, bats, rackets, quoits, tambourines, streamers, empty containers, pots and pans.

Lower body movements

Provide objects to move over, through or around.

Suggestions for equipment:
Hoops, tunnels, foam noodles, cones, tyres, boxes, coloured carpet squares, chalk marks and piles of leaves.

Climbing

Always consider children's safety when planning climbing activities. However, children should be allowed to take appropriate risks.

Suggestions for equipment:
Climbing frames, low branches, ladders, ropes, stepping stones and boxes.

Balancing

Balancing activities do not need to be high, and age should always be considered when setting up equipment.

Suggestions for equipment:
Beams, wobble boards, planks of wood, logs, chalk lines, stepping logs and stones.

Building

Building activities can include stacking items, or making constructions such as cubby houses.

Suggestions for equipment:
Wooden blocks, sand, buckets, boxes, planks of wood, tyres, old linen and furniture.

Creative movement

Suggestions for equipment:
Music, musical instruments, bells, rattles, streamers and ribbons.

Movement ideas for one- to five-year-olds

Lower body

Examples include jumping, kicking, marching, walking and running.

Start with:

- *jumping* on the spot, to music or on a low trampoline
- *kicking* large, stationary blow-up balls, scrunched-up paper or empty plastic containers
- *marching* on the spot, to music or around furniture
- *walking* on different surfaces, or around different objects
- *running* through tied-up paper streamers.

Progress to:

- *jumping* over or around objects such as ropes, cones or coloured carpet squares; for longer distances, mimicking an animal
- *kicking* using either leg, or for longer distances and greater heights
- *marching* sideways, backwards and forwards or leading with the opposite leg
- *walking* in different directions, speeds and shapes, on tip toes or along a rope
- *running* backwards, around an obstacle course or for longer distances.

Upper body

Examples include building, hitting, throwing and digging.

Start with:

- *building* with big, light objects, such as cardboard boxes, milk crates or buckets
- *hitting* large, stationary beach balls or scrunched-up paper (with hands)
- *throwing* pom poms, large balls or beanbags
- *digging* through boxes of scarves or wool (with hands).

Progress to:

- *building* with small and large objects, such as boxes, sticks or blocks
- *hitting* slow-moving balls, with one hand and then the other
- *throwing* with one hand and then the opposite hand, or at a target
- *digging* with spades or old containers in dirt or sand.

Whole body

Examples include dancing, climbing and balancing.

Start with:

- *dancing* to different stories, sounds and rhythms, or to percussion instruments
- *climbing* on furniture, pillows, through hoops or under sheets
- *balancing* between chalk lines, inside a hoop or on top of large, level surfaces.

Progress to:

- *dancing* at different speeds or with objects such as streamers, or learning dance sequences
- *climbing* up and down ropes and ladders, or over boxes and climbing frames
- *balancing* on planks of wood, on one leg, with arms in the air or on tip toes.

Outdoor play for one- to five-year-olds

Children who spend more time outdoors will generally be more active. Access to a covered outdoor area allows children to be active in all weather conditions, and being outdoors in cooler weather does not cause the common cold. Outdoor areas usually provide children with more space, and opportunities to use larger muscle groups and experience moving in a whole range of different shapes, speeds and directions. Outdoor play also allows children to be messy and noisy.

Outdoor play gives children opportunities to:

- make big movements
- try *new* movements
- have 'rough and tumble' play
- improve their balance, strength and coordination skills
- seek adventure, watch and explore nature
- extend their creativity
- learn from their mistakes
- manage their fears and build toughness.

Taking ‘chances’ in outdoor play

Although outdoor play may appear risky, children need opportunities to play freely and explore outdoor play spaces. Allowing children to get to the next level of exploration helps them to test themselves and manage new tasks. As with ‘rough and tumble’ play, playing outside is important for the development of both girls and boys. What some adults may see as consequences of ‘risky’ play could actually be side effects of fun active play experiences, such as:

- being messy and loud
- getting grubby
- getting small grazes, bumps and bruises
- dealing with heights, different surfaces and new play areas and items.

Parents should be encouraged to allow their children to participate in risky play, and be educated to understand that the benefits may outweigh the risks.

Active play and children with disabilities

Children of all abilities benefit from physical activity and play. Engaging with parents is particularly important when working with children with disabilities. It is crucial to find out from parents the details of their child’s disability, and how it affects everyday functions and abilities. It is also important to discuss the child’s interests, dislikes and capabilities as well as what the parents’ goals are for their child. Ask whether it is possible to contact the child’s health professional for more information. You can help by being patient and generous in spending time with children with disabilities.

Reminders for outdoor play…

Be SunSmart©	Abide by sun protection policies – sunscreen, shelter, hats and suitable clothing.
Supervise	Make sure that you actively supervise children around water, heights, steps, fences, animals or small objects.
Clothing	Encourage parents to dress children in clothing and footwear that is suitable for being active.
Water	Make sure children drink plenty of water when playing outside, particularly in hot weather.
Join in	Join in with children's play and support them in outdoor play. Make sure that play is still led by children.

Children from all cultures

Different cultures have varying sensitivities that need to be respected.

- Talk to parents about what play and being active means in their country and culture.
- Ask parents to bring in a variety of music, instruments or play items.
- Encourage different styles of dancing and movement.
- Keep in mind differing views on body contact or dress.

Safety recommendations

Each state and territory has its own guidelines and recommendations for making indoor and outdoor play spaces safe and in line with Australian standards. Your setting will need to abide by the regulations relevant for its specific location.

Sedentary behaviour and screen-time

'Sedentary behaviour' is a term used to describe time spent doing physically inactive tasks that do not require a lot of energy. Watching television is a common childhood sedentary activity. Children who spend long periods of time inactive are more likely to have poorer physical, social and intellectual development. Planning and encouraging physical activity during the time children are awake is an important part of promoting a healthy lifestyle. Limiting long periods of time where children are inactive is just as important as making sure they do enough activity.

Sedentary tasks can be grouped as either **'productive'** or **'non-productive'**. Productive sedentary behaviour and quiet 'down time' are necessary for young children.

Non-productive sedentary behaviour:

- Watching television and DVDs for leisure.
- Playing screen games such as handheld, video or computer games.
- Being restrained for long periods of time, such as in a car seat, high chair, porta-cot or stroller.

Productive sedentary behaviour:

- Reading, listening to stories or looking at books.
- Quiet play, such as art and craft activities, drawing and puzzles.
- Sleeping.

RECOMMENDATION

Children younger than two years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).

Why no screen-time for children under two?

Babies should not be restrained or kept inactive (during awake time) for long periods, especially in front of the television. Before babies can walk, they need plenty of time to practise movements such as reaching, kicking and feeling. As babies become more mobile and start crawling and walking, they continue to need plenty of time to move freely and creatively, practise new movements, and play with others.

Screen-time is not recommended for babies and children less than two years of age, particularly in the early childhood setting, because it may:

- reduce the amount of time they have for active play, social contact with others and chances for language development
- reduce the length of time they can stay focused.

RECOMMENDATION

For children two to five years of age, sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.

Why limit screen-time for two- to five-year-olds?

Most children will be exposed to screen-time at home, and for many children this will be excessive. In the early childhood setting, it may be decided that screen-time is not included in the program, or only limited to special occasions.

In toddlers and pre-schoolers, long periods of screen-time have been associated with:

- less active, outdoor and creative play time
- an increased risk of being overweight
- unhealthy eating habits
- poorer social skills
- fewer opportunities to develop thinking skills
- slower development of language skills and short-term memory
- television-viewing habits that may continue throughout childhood.

RECOMMENDATION

Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time – with the exception of sleeping.

Sometimes children are left inactive for longer than they ought to be, in places such as high chairs, strollers or car seats. Even during outdoor play time, some children may stay inactive.

Young children who have adults to interact with during play are more likely to be active. Be prepared to join in with play and help less active children be more active during play time. This can include encouraging children to:

- walk or pedal instead of always being in a stroller or car seat
- help with packing up toys, clothes or shopping
- play with simple items, such as buckets, dress-up clothes or old boxes and containers
- make big movements and try new things
- play outdoors during daylight hours.

'Young children who have adults to interact with during play are more likely to be active.'

Children from all cultures

Different cultures may have different values and traditions concerning sedentary behaviour and down time. When working with families from different cultures:

- Find out what they do for quiet or down time.
- Ask parents to provide quiet games and books that are representative of their culture.
- Inform families about screen-time and physical inactivity recommendations.

‘Inform families about screen-time and physical inactivity recommendations.‘

Recommendations summary for birth to five years

Recommendations summary for birth to five years	Birth–1 year	1–2 years	2–3 years	3–5 years
Physical activity recommendation	Physical activity should be encouraged from birth.	Should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.	Should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.	Should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.
Sedentary recommendation – screen-time	Should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).	Should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).	Sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.	Sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.
Sedentary recommendation – prolonged inactivity	Should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.	Should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.	Should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.	Should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.

For more information

Please refer to your state or territory resources as well as specific early childhood setting information.

Healthy eating

Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia
T: (02) 9482 5988 or 1300 728 000
W: www.allergyfacts.org.au

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)
W: www.allergy.org.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association
T: (03) 9885 0855
Breastfeeding helpline: 1800 686 268
W: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Australian Dental Association
T: (02) 9906 4412
W: www.ada.org.au

Australian Dietary Guidelines and ***Infant Feeding Guidelines***,
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and
National Health and Medical Research Council
W: www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Australian General Practice Network
W: www.agpn.com.au

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
Health Insite
W: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating,
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and National Health and Medical Research Council
W: www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Dietitians Association of Australia
T: (02) 6163 5200 or 1800 812 942
W: www.daa.asn.au

Early Childhood Australia
T: (02) 6242 1800 or 1800 356 900
W: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)
T: (02) 6271 2222
W: www.foodstandards.gov.au

Kidsafe
W: www.kidsafe.com.au

Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand
T: (02) 9431 8621
W: www.lcanz.org

National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care
W: www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood/policy_agenda/quality/pages/home.aspx#nqf

Raising Children Network
W: www.raisingchildren.net.au

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)
T: (03) 9489 8099
W: www.snaicc.org.au

Physical activity

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)
W: www.health.gov.au

Get Set 4 Life, Healthy Kids Check
W: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Healthy_Kids_Check

Healthy Opportunities for Preschoolers (HOP)
W: www.educ.uvic.ca/faculty/temple/pages/hop.htm

Raising Children Network
W: www.raisingchildren.net.au

Sport New Zealand (SPARC)
T: +64 4 472 8058 (international)
W: www.sportnz.org.nz

2010 Legacies Now
W: www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap_bc/

it's fun

Australian Dietary Guidelines

Guideline 1	To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs. • Children and adolescents should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally. They should be physically active every day and their growth should be checked regularly. • Older people should eat nutritious foods and keep physically active to help maintain muscle strength and a healthy weight.
Guideline 2	Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day: • plenty of vegetables, including different types and colours, and legumes/beans • fruit • grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley • lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans • milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat (reduced fat milks are not suitable for children under the age of two years). And drink plenty of water.

Guideline 3	Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol. a. Limit intake of foods high in saturated fat such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks. • Replace high fat foods which contain predominantly saturated fats such as butter, cream, cooking margarine, coconut and palm oil with foods which contain predominantly polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as oils, spreads, nut butters/pastes and avocado. • Low fat diets are not suitable for children under the age of two years. b. Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added salt. • Read labels to choose lower sodium options among similar foods. • Do not add salt to foods in cooking or at the table. c. Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks. d. If you choose to drink alcohol, limit intake. For women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.
Guideline 4	Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding.
Guideline 5	Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.

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Index

active play 53, 58-74
    everyday physical tasks 54, 59, 63
    structured play 54, 59, 61
    unstructured play 54, 59, 60
active transport 54, 59, 62
appetite 14, 17, 31, 37, 38, 39, 40
body image 34
bottles 7, 8-9, 11-12, 13, 15, 17-18
breakfast 42-43
breastfeeding 5-10, 11, 15-16, 17
breastmilk 5-10, 11, 14-16, 17
    benefits of 5-6
    labelling and storage 6-7
choking risks 48
cultural and religious practices
    29, 44, 74, 78
disabilities, children with 19, 72
discretionary choices
    24, 27, 33, 38, 40, 44, 48, 51
family foods 16, 18, 20-44
food allergies 15, 16, 44, 45-47
food for celebrations 44
food groups 16, 22-26, 27, 28, 37
food intolerances 45, 47
food safety 6, 13, 45-52
    hand-washing 50, 52
    hygiene 49-52
    serving food 52
food variety 16, 22-26, 32, 35
fussy eaters 38
guided discovery 60
infant formula 9, 11-13, 14-16
lunch 25, 27, 28, 35, 37
meal planning
    food from home 28, 42
    in the setting 28, 42
mealtime environments 32, 35
movement
    for birth to one year 55-57
    for one to five years 58-71
movement ideas
    for birth to one year 56-57
    for one to five years 60-70
play spaces
    indoor play 54, 56-57, 67-70, 74
    outdoor play 54, 57, 67, 71-73, 74, 78
policy 10, 28, 45-46
religious practices (*see: cultural and religious practices*)
risky play 68, 72
safety recommendations 74
screen-time 75-77, 78, 81
sedentary behaviour 75-81
    non-productive 75-77
    productive 75
snacks 20, 25, 26, 28, 30, 39-41, 50
solids, introducing 14-19
    suitable foods 15-16, 18
vegan eating practices 26
vegetarian eating practices 26
water 11-12, 15, 17, 28, 30-31, 41

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