

Let them play! Toddlers need 3 hours of physical activity per day

[1] 'Tummy time' recommended for babies under 12 months to help develop neck and back muscles

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Source: Motherly

Format: Article

Publication Date: 21 Nov 2017

AVAILABILITY

Read online [2]

Attachment	Size
 participaction-2016-report-card-are-kids-too-tired-to-move-highlight.pdf [3]	815.54 KB
 participaction-2016-report-card-are-kids-too-tired-to-move-full.pdf [4]	2.33 MB

EXCERPTS

To parents it can seem like they are in constant motion, but experts worry today's toddlers aren't getting enough exercise, and that too much time in strollers and highchairs can lead to unhealthy habits later in childhood.

That's why new guidelines say kids between one and four should get at least three hours of physical activity spread throughout the day.

The new report by Canadian researchers suggests toddlers and preschoolers need at least 180 minutes of physical activity a day, and while previous recommendations suggested an hour of "energetic play" starting at five, that hour is now recommended for kids as young as three.

"The older children get, the more energetic play they need. For toddlers, energetic play could include running, dancing and playing outside. For preschoolers, energetic play could include hopping, swimming and bike riding," the reports' writers note.

A collaboration between obesity specialists at Ottawa's Children's Hospital and experts from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology and the non-profit group ParticipAction, the report stresses the importance of more physical activity in a world where screens take up more and more of kids' time.

The recommendations include replacing indoor time with outdoor play, and swapping screen time and time spent restrained in a seat or stroller with active, physical play time.

According to the experts, making these changes (while preserving sufficient sleep time) can make kids healthier now and as they grow.

"The earlier we can influence the trajectory of children's behaviors, growth and development, the better," Dr. Mark Tremblay, director of the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the Ottawa hospital told The Canadian Press.

The guidelines suggest we can get to work on this even before our kids reach the toddler years. Babies should have daily activity goals, too. At least a half hour of "tummy time" exercises for babies under a year old can help set the stage for a lifetime of healthy habits.

Letting kids explore and play outside isn't just good for their bodies, it's good for their brains, too. Outdoor play has been shown to help with brain development in toddlers and preschoolers, and any parent will tell you it comes with another added bonus: An hour of energetic play at the park pretty much guarantees an hour of nap time will follow.

Region: Canada ^[5]

Tags: physical activity ^[6]

play ^[7]

infant/toddler ^[8]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/11/let-them-play-toddlers-need-3-hours-physical-activity-day> [2]

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<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/play> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8165> [9] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/health-and-safety>