

Active play opportunities at child care ^[1]

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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Format: Article

Publication Date: 18 May 2015

AVAILABILITY

Full article in PDF ^[2]

Abstract:

Physical activity (PA) is important for children's health and development, yet preschoolers are not meeting PA recommendations. The objective of this study was to examine different PA opportunities at child care and how variation in indoor versus outdoor and free versus teacher-led opportunities relate to children's PA.

An observational study of 98 children (mean age 4.5 years, 49% girls) from 10 child care centers. Classrooms were observed for at least 4 full days per center (total 50 days) to categorize time into (1) not an active play opportunity (APO); (2) naptime; (3) APO, outdoor free play; (4) APO, outdoor teacher-led; (5) APO, indoor free play; and (6) APO, indoor teacher-led. Children wore accelerometers during observations. Linear regression models examined the influence of APO categories on moderate-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and sedentary time.

Children's activity was 73% sedentary, 13% light, and 14% MVPA. For 88% of time children did not have APOs, including 26% time as naptime. On average, 48 minutes per day were APOs (41% sedentary, 18% light, and 41% MVPA), 33 minutes per day were outdoors. The most frequent APO was outdoor free play (8% of time); outdoor teacher-led time was <1%. Children were more active and less sedentary outdoors versus indoors and during the child-initiated APOs (indoors and outdoors) versus teacher-led APOs.

Preschoolers were presented with significantly fewer than recommended opportunities for PA at child care. More APOs are needed for children to meet recommendations, particularly those that encourage more outdoor time, more teacher-led and child-initiated active play, and flexibility in naptime for preschoolers.

Also of interest: Canadian research

The Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group ^[3]

Preschoolers' playtime needs to be more active ^[4]

Related link: Preschoolers get too little physical activity in child care ^[5]

Region: United States ^[6]

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