

Food and Fitness for Children and Adolescents

Healthy eating and being physically active is particularly important for children and adolescents because their nutrition and lifestyle influences their wellbeing, growth and development.

Why is healthy eating and activity important?

Nutrition: Children and adolescents have a higher nutritional need than adults due to the increased demands for growth alongside body maintenance and physical activity.

Activity: Play and physical activity promotes growth and development and has multiple benefits for physical, mental and social/emotional health that can contribute to life skills and learning.

Benefits of physical activity:

- Builds confidence and improves social skills
- Gives opportunity to learn new skills and life skills
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Helps to develop coordination
- Enhances concentration and learning
- Makes children feel good and elevates their mood
- Inspires positivity and encourages tolerance
- Helps to relieve stress and maintain mental and emotional wellbeing
- Improves sleep and energy levels
- Reduces the risk of morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases i.e diabetes, heart disease later in life
- Improves overall health and fitness and helps children and adolescents maintain a healthy weight and prevent childhood obesity

What is physical activity?

Physical activity as any bodily movement produced by muscles that requires energy - activities include physical play, games, household chores, PE and additional recreational activities.

In 2010 81% of 11 to 17 year olds were not meeting the recommended daily level of physical activity, with girls being slightly less active than boys.

How much of physical activity is recommended?

Children and adolescents aged 5 to 17years:

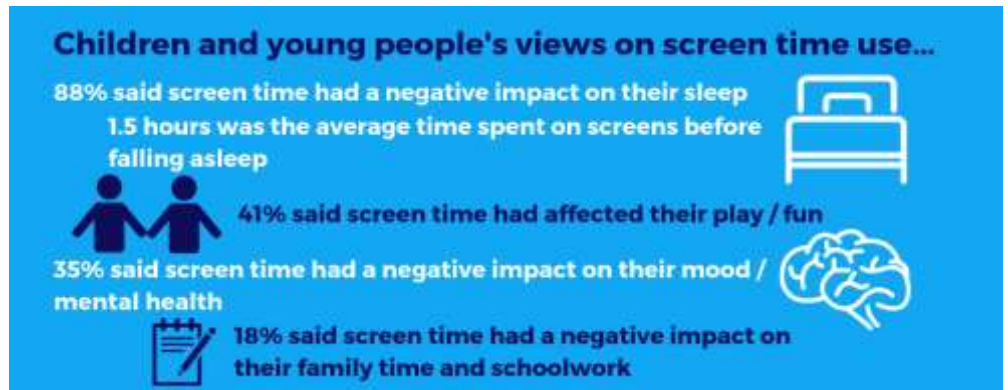
- Should do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily
- Physical activity of amounts greater than 60 minutes daily will provide additional health benefits
- Activity should include activities that strengthen muscle and bone, at least three times per week
- Children and Adolescents playing organised sport should participate in a day off a week and participate in no more than five days a week in one single sport

- The maximum amount of organised sport (including training) a child should complete is one hour per year of age per week until the age of 16. For example an 11 year old should complete no more than 11 hours of physical activity in one week (including school sports and PE)
- Between the ages of 6 to 12 years it is recommended for children to participate in multiple sports to help develop general co-ordination, stamina and fitness rather than focus on one sport only. It is suggested that competing in multiple sports at a younger age leads to greater success in a single sport later in life.

Screen time and sleep

Screen time

Recommendations are that families should negotiate screen time limits with their children based upon the needs of the individual child to ensure that it does not replace physical, social and sleep activities.



Sleep

The table below gives an indication of the amount of sleep your child needs on a regular basis to keep them healthy.

Your child's age	Recommended sleep time in 24 hours
Infants 4 to 12 months	12 to 16 hours including naps
Children 1 to 2 years	11 to 14 hours including naps
Children 3 to 5 years	10 to 13 hours including naps
Children 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teenagers 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours

What does healthy eating look like?

Starchy carbohydrates - Starchy carbohydrates contain fibre and a really important part of a healthy diet and should make up about a third of the food we eat. They are packed full of nutrients (including B vitamins, iron and fibre) and help you keep your energy levels up during the day: i.e. wholegrain pastas/rice, multigrain breads, potatoes and fruit/vegetables.

Protein - Include protein into at least two meals a day for growth and repair of your body. Rich sources of protein include lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs, nuts, beans or pulses.

Fruit and vegetables - It is important to eat five (or more) portions of fruit and vegetables every day to prevent heart disease and reduce the risk of some types of cancer.

Hydration - It is important to stay hydrated during the day. When the weather is warm or if you are more active you may need more. Avoid soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugars. Recommended amounts:

- 1 to 3 years old (girls and boys): 4 cups of water/day.
- 4 to 8 years old (girls and boys): 4 cups of water/day.
- 9 to 13 years old (girls): 7 cups of water/day.
- 9 to 13 years old (boys): 8 cups of water/day.
- 14 to 18 years old (girls): 8 cups of water/day.
- 14 to 18 years old (boys): 11 cups of water/day.

Dairy delights - Aim for three portions of dairy per day and choose low sugar options to keep your teeth healthy and your bones strong.

Why is Vitamin D important for children and adolescents?

Vitamin D helps to control the amount of calcium and phosphate in our bodies. Both are needed for healthy bones, teeth and muscles.

Vitamin D is also important in protecting muscle strength and preventing rickets, osteomalacia and falls. Most of our vitamin D is made by the action of sunlight on the skin and some children and adults are recommended to take vitamin D supplements over winter months (September-April). Other sources of vitamin D include - oily fish, red meat, and egg yolks.

A symptom of Vitamin D deficiency can include multi muscle, joint and evening pain – please liaise with your GP or pharmacist for any additional concerns around deficiency.

Sources of information

British Nutrition Foundation - Diet, nutrition Foundation and update, E.Weichselbaum et al 2014.

BDA British Dietetic Association

World Health Organisation - www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity

National Institute of Clinical Evidence - www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph17/documents/promoting-physical-activity-for-children-consultation-on-the-draft-guidance3

www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/health-impacts-screen-time-guide-clinicians-parents

www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-12/rcpch_screen_time_parent_fact_sheet_-_final.pdf

www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) - www.nhs.uk/news/food-and-diet/the-new-guidelines-on-vitamin-d-what-you-need-to-know/

www.nhs.uk/change4life

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Disclaimer

Please note this is a generic ESHT information sheet. If you have specific questions about how this relates to your child, please ask your doctor. Please note this information may not necessarily reflect treatment at other hospitals.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

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Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

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The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information: MSK Physiotherapy Paediatric special interest group ESHT Paediatric Dietician Team
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