



## overview

To promote health and prevent obesity, physical activity must become a daily habit for children starting at an early age. Adding 120 minutes of physical activity into each day may seem extremely difficult; however, this is not the case. Early care and education programs around the state of Wisconsin have successfully integrated 120 minutes of physical activity into their **schedules**, **transitions**, and **lesson plans** without having to add time to their days!

## considerations for all ages

### Schedules

Daily schedules can help you ensure that physical activity is intentionally planned every day. Here are a few things to consider when creating your schedule:

- Make time for at least 60 minutes of child-led, free active play each day.
- Incorporate teacher-led activities throughout the day for a total of 60 minutes each day.
- Make sure teacher-led and child-initiated active play occur both indoors and outdoors.
- Plan for physical activity throughout the day, but stay flexible. Make a backup plan for physical activity for those days that don't go as planned.
- Make your schedule visible to the children so they can tell when they will have their next opportunity to be active and release energy.
- Provide adequate rest times for children.
- Encourage parent involvement on a regular basis. Ask parents to join in opportunities for physical activity, send home information about physical activity in newsletters, and share each child's successes in daily reports for parents.

“I find that the children are able to focus and learn better after implementing 120 minutes of physical activity in our daily schedule.”

– Kimberley Yehle,  
Library Square School,  
Kenosha

*“The most important lesson I’ve learned regarding physical activity is that you can fit it into your day during times that you were previously inactive. The children in my care love to do jumping jacks while waiting for everyone to be ready for lunch. Being active can be simple, spontaneous and fun!”*

– Gail Pitzen, Country Care Children’s Center, Cuba City

## Transitions

Transitions provide an excellent opportunity to promote physical activity throughout the day. Whether you are moving from free play to group time or from outdoors to indoors, you can also give children the opportunity to develop skills and release energy. Keep these tips in mind for successful and smooth transitions:

- View transition times as opportunities to utilize and practice gross motor development skills
- Active transitions can help meet the recommendations for teacher-led physical activity for toddlers and preschoolers. For example, as children wait to wash their hands, play Simon Says or simply have children jump rather than walk from one space to another.
- As you lead children in activities, model physical activity for them. This makes expectations for each activity clear

- Plan ahead. Active transitions that are thought out and well-designed maximize success.
- Strive to meet both group and individual needs for physical activity. Provide modifications for children with more advanced skills.
- Always give children clear expectations and simple directions for transitions so they occur smoothly.

## Lesson Planning

Lesson plans ensure that physical activity is integrated into every part of the day across all content areas. Physical activity can be integrated into each part of your day. Ideas include:

- Integrate physical activity into ALL curriculum content areas, including literacy and mathematics. For example, children can act out stories and use mathematics as a guide for active indoor or outdoor exploration.
- Use movement as one method of learning. Children will be more successful when they have the opportunity to learn from seeing, hearing, and doing.
- When creating lesson plans, think about ways to introduce new materials that will be available during free choice times.
- Model how to use any new movement materials that you provide for children. When children of all ages know how and when to use materials, there will be fewer mishaps during the week.
- Plan out physical activities for group times throughout the week, including a couple of backup ideas, just in case.
- As you create the lesson plans, outline clear expectations, simple directions and goals for activities. This will ensure the success of your active lesson plans.

*“A balance of structure and flexibility means that the basic schedule is set, and everyone can depend on it. Yet the schedule can be changed or modified, depending on the day — the weather, moods and interests of the children...”*

– All About the ECERS-R  
page 359

*“For young children, curriculum is everything that happens, including the transitions, spills, spats and naps.”*

– Curriculum That Matters  
by Margie Carter

## infants

Individualized infant schedules should take into account each infant's developmental progress and preferences. This means that two infants may be engaged in activities that look quite different. (See sample schedule in Appendix G). Physical activity opportunities are spread throughout the day. Ideas include:

- Include two or three opportunities for tummy time so infants can practice lifting their heads and focusing on objects in front of them
- As you go through the motions of changing diapers, talk to infants about their movements
- As you transition for sleeping periods, move the infant's arms and legs up and down and across the midlines before swaddling. Talk to the infant all the time, describing movements
- To promote physical activity, try to reduce or even eliminate the use of restrictive equipment such as bouncy seats or swings

Think about ways to integrate other experiences that will help infants' future physical and gross motor development. For example, the sensory experiences integrated into the activity at right can transform tummy time into an opportunity for an infant to practice tracking the motion of an object. This will later help with hand-eye coordination and the manipulation of objects.

## activity idea

### Jazzed Up Tummy Time

During tummy time, place infants on their tummies on a soft blanket. With the lights dimmed softly, play *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. Roll a light-up Mylar water ball between yourself and another child care provider or an older child. This adds sensory experiences and helps infants develop visual tracking skills during routine tummy time.

**Equipment:** *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* music, a light-up Mylar water ball, a blanket

**Time Frame:** 5 to 10 minutes or until interest is lost

**Adaptations:** Adjust the speed at which you roll the ball so the infant is not overwhelmed, but remains interested

## quick tip

Toddlers love to move! Allow lots of opportunities for movement throughout the day. Create cards with quick ideas to help you get them moving!

## toddlers

Toddlers need 90 minutes of physical activity each day, including 30 minutes of teacher-led physical activity. Here are some ideas and considerations for incorporating opportunities for physical and gross motor development in daily routines into toddlers' daily routines:

- Focus your lesson planning around refining skills that toddlers have developed. For example, toddlers can run, but they are not yet agile or fast, so give them opportunities to practice this skill.
- Make your schedule visible to toddlers and use symbols and pictures that let them know what is coming next.
- Use larger blocks of time in your schedule to maintain flexibility throughout the day.
- Plan for free playtimes with options for movement, as well as group times that keep children up and active.
- Captivate children in physical activity by using songs and dances that are familiar to them.
- Promote language and literacy development along with physical activity. For example, read a story that is based on a song such as *Five Little Ducks* or *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*, and encourage the children to act out the motions with you.
- Model activities and describe your movements so children can copy the movements you make.
- Use words to describe your movements, for example say "shake your hands" and "twist your body back and forth."

## activity ideas

### Cooperative Musical Hoops

This has the same basic rules as the traditional game of musical chairs, except no one is ever "out." Spread Hula-Hoops on the floor (if you do not have Hula-Hoops, make rings out of yarn or ribbon). You should have one less Hula-Hoop than number of children. Play fun music as children move from hoop to hoop. When the music stops, all players must get inside a hoop so that no players are eliminated. Remove one hoop each round. As you remove the hoops, let the group know that no one is out. Part of the fun is seeing how many players can fit into one hoop. The game is over when everyone is in the last remaining hoop.

### Active Cleanup!

Make cleanup times more exciting and fun for both you and your toddlers. Each day, focus on a different traveling skill, such as walking fast, hopping, or jumping. When it is time to clean up, ask your toddlers to use these traveling skills as they put away materials. Add sensory experiences by playing music or letting children ring a bell when they put an item away. Be sure to model your expectations for cleanup, too!

**Equipment:** A classroom that has been in use

**Time Frame:** Until cleanup is finished

**Adaptations:** Use different elements for sensory experiences, such as dimming lights

- Lead toddlers in active, simple transitions. For example, on Monday, instruct children to hop like bunnies from one space to another; on Tuesday, have them waddle like ducks, etc.

Don't worry if some children participate more actively than others. It is all right for toddlers to roam and explore on their own.

# preschoolers and older children

Best practices say preschool-age and older children need 120 minutes of physical activity each day, including at least 60 minutes of teacher-led physical activity. To achieve this standard, look at your current schedule and use your imagination to add physical activity wherever you can. Ideas include:

- To create opportunities for teacher-led activities, sneak physical activity into group times (both small and large), as well as transition times
- Make music and movement interest areas available during free-choice time. Play music that guides children in movement and dancing
- Children can also engage in child-initiated active play outdoors. Provide a variety of materials outdoors to foster development of traveling skills (running, jumping, climbing), manipulative skills (throwing, kicking), and balancing skills

- For group times, consider activities such as jumping out the date. If it is the 20th of the month, have children jump 20 times. Mix it up by encouraging the children to jump on one foot or two feet, or to take little jumps or big jumps



- Try an active story time where children act out a book as you read, or practice their recall skills by recreating the storyline later. (See *Books To Move To: Physical Activity and Literacy*, Appendix I)
- Activity and math go hand in hand. Children can learn numbers, shapes, directions and patterns through movement
- Science covers health and the human body. As you teach children how movement helps their heart, muscles and bones, they learn foundations of science

## activity idea

### A Wild Rumpus

Read the book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. After reading it, invite the children to join you in dancing the Wild Rumpus!

**Equipment:** The book *Where the Wild Things Are*

**Time Frame:** 15 minutes

## quick tip

Try a few teacher-led physical activities at the end of outdoor play as a way to make transitions smoother.

## multi-age groups

Working with a group of children of various ages and developmental stages requires great flexibility when planning schedules and lessons. You will also see differing physical activity and gross motor development needs. Here are some ideas for incorporating physical activity into your daily routines:

- Focus on one general category of skills and then think about how each child in your care is currently developing that skill. For example, create a relay race focused on traveling skills. Instead of breaking into teams, have all the children participate on the same team. Call out which developmentally appropriate traveling skills each child will use to begin his/her portion of the relay (e.g., preschool-age children can skip; toddlers can run)
- Keep activity cards on a ring, or have a pair of dice with illustrations of physical activity that can quickly be referenced when a new idea is needed. These tools may help with time management because they enable older children to help lead activities
- Throw a dance party! Children of all ages can be active on their own when there is music

## activity idea

### Group Shapes

Encourage children to work together as a group and to act individually to form different shapes and objects out of their bodies. You can create shapes, such as circles, triangles, and rectangles, or letters, such as "C" and "Y," or even objects, such as tables or chairs. Older children can help younger children. Hold infants while you lead this activity so they can watch.

**Equipment:** Ideas of objects to create

**Time Frame:** 5 to 10 minutes or until interest is lost

**Adaptations:** Keep modeling how to make your body look like the different shapes

– From *Healthy Movement & Active Play*

## quick tip

Use movement activities that actively involve all children, rather than activities in which some children just wait and watch. For example, modify games so no child is ever "out."

"We start our day with the bingo animal cards. I cut them up and put them in a bucket. They take turns drawing a card and acting it out. It's part of our 'get the day started routine.'"

– Nancy Storkel,  
Learning Ladder Daycare,  
Tomah

"Gross and fine motor activities build skills that children continue to expand upon. Movement can easily be incorporated into activities ranging from math to literacy to science and beyond."

– Jill Bodwin, CESA 7 Headstart,  
Manitowoc

## inclusion

The best approach to inclusion and daily routines is to honor each child as an individual. If a child has an individualized education plan (IEP) or an individualized family service plan (IFSP), use this as a guide for thinking about scheduling, transitions and lesson plans as they relate to physical activity. These plans provide expertise and valuable guidance from each child's parents and can inform your physical activity daily routines.

Be mindful of time as you create schedules or lesson plans. Children with developmental delays or disabilities may need more time to complete tasks or they may need a shorter period of time to ensure they are not stressed or overwhelmed by the activity. Alternatively, children may need more breaks to rest. Think about the pace at which the activity is moving, and do not be afraid to slow things down or speed things up accordingly.

Build in flexibility when planning and implementing your lessons. Modify rules to games, prepare extra cues or prompts for children, and ensure you have adaptive equipment for the activity. For example, a child with a hearing deficit may benefit from being strategically placed across from you in order to see your lips move and watch you model activities, or by being next to you to hear instructions better. Remember that there is variation in developmental delays and disabilities.

Not every child with a hearing deficit or every child with autism will react the same way to an activity. Make sure you know the children in your care and customize activities accordingly.



*“I think that no matter what age they are or what kind of disability they may have, there is always some kind of physical activity they can do, so I encourage them to at least try and if they think it’s too hard, then they can try something else.”*

*– Maichao Lor, MC Care, Wausau*

## cultural competency

Just as your child care program has daily routines, children have daily routines at home, too. What children do at home carries over into your child care program and what you do carries over into their home lives. It is important to remember that different values guide families' daily routines. For example, one family might prioritize eating dinner together every night while another prioritizes community involvement in the evenings.

An understanding of daily home routines will help you understand how a child reacts to the daily routines in your early care and education program. Talk to parents about each child's life at home. Be open and respectful, and honor each family's values and priorities, as these are reflections of their culture. Eating, sleeping and physical activity patterns at home influence how active a child will be in your program. And a child's activity in your program will affect eating and sleeping overall. Communicate frequently with parents about the amount of physical activity their child is getting in your care and discuss the benefits of physical activity for their child. Ask parents "how" and "what" questions to encourage them to talk about their children's physical activity both at home and in care.

*"We get all the children together, 3 and up, and have a baseball game every Tuesday in the summer at the park across the street from our center."*

– Karen Verhagen, Kinder Haus, Kaukauna

## tools included

- 1. Full Day Sample Schedule: Group Child Care, Family Child Care, and Infants and Toddlers.** This sample schedule provides an outline for how to demonstrate that children are physically active throughout the day. (Appendices G and H)
- 2. Books to Move to: Physical Activity and Literacy.** Physical activity fits well with the school readiness goals of early care and education. One way to do this is to make storytimes become active. Here is a list of books that can get kids moving as they are learning to read. (Appendix I)

## engaging families

Plan weekly walks for families in your program. Designate a defined route. On the walk, try some of the games used for transitions during the day so parents can experience and enjoy them. Consider bringing pets for the walk, too. Make sure you bring plenty of water!

## communities

Encourage your community to provide safe routes, such as sidewalks and bike trails, near child care centers so families and staff can walk or bike safely to your program!

*"This month we encouraged family scavenger hunts: Start by making a list of common things found in your neighborhood, like the blue house or the tall oak tree. Then walk around your neighborhood with your child and search for the items on your list, which can lead you to a fun destination, like the park!"*

– Jill Bodwin,  
CESA 7 HeadStart,  
Manitowoc

## quick tip

Think about culture and gender roles. There are overall societal norms that in many ways encourage physical activity in boys but not girls. However, we know girls need just as much physical activity as boys to be healthy.