

What Works in Afterschool

healthy eating • physical activity • healthy weight



We all want children to develop healthy habits and we know that, while these habits begin at an early age, they are reinforced during school-aged years. Children model behaviors of the people around them, such as teachers, parents, and other adults. When these individuals model healthy behaviors by making appropriate food choices and being physically active, children follow suit. This lifestyle allows for healthy growth of the children physically and mentally, as well as improved scholastic achievements.

Where to Start:

1. Integrate nutrition and physical activity education into enrichment activities and lesson plans; link this education to daily curriculum from classes and/or to the snack/meal provided within the program.
2. Work with your school food service program or other snack provider to ensure that all program snacks/meals meet or align with the USDA guidelines and are appealing to children – this also includes family nights, special treats, and anything else not provided by food service.
3. Provide regular education for children, parents/caregivers, and teachers/staff/providers on the concepts and importance of healthy eating and physical activity.
4. Implement a program wellness policy that incorporates nutrition and physical activity strategies.
5. Utilize existing nutrition and physical activity resources:
 - ❖ Move More North Carolina: Recommended Standards for Afterschool Physical Activity <http://www.nchealthyschools.org/docs/school/afterschoolstandards.pdf>
 - ❖ Eat Smart: North Carolina's Recommended Standards for All Foods Available in School <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/EatSmartSchoolStds/Texts/SchoolFoodsStandards.pdf>
 - ❖ Wisconsin Department of Health Services: Healthy Bites and Active Early Toolkits <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/Sites/Community/Childcare/index.htm>
6. Utilize monthly newsletters and other forms of parental engagement to strengthen parent/caregiver buy-in and support
7. Make connections with the community and other wellness initiatives to strengthen buy-in from parents, caregivers, teachers, providers, and other adults impacting their lives. Examples include:
 - ❖ Form partnerships with community groups, businesses or healthcare organizations to develop afterschool program initiatives; tie into existing promotions, media campaigns and special events (i.e., Turn off the TV Week, Week of the Young Child.).
 - ❖ Join or form a local coalition that includes experts in nutrition, physical activity, afterschool programs, and educational requirements to address nutrition & physical activity in a coordinated manner through all facets of life – school, afterschool, community, and home life.
 - ❖ Connect with summer programs and other initiatives in the community that support wellness for year-round activity.

Suggested Intervention/Program Strategies:

The following page lists several proven or best-practice strategies for improving physical activity and nutrition in afterschool programs. While not comprehensive, the strategies can serve as a guide to encourage the best possible environment for the health and well-being of the young children you care about.

Focus Areas for Children's Health:*

-  Increase fruit & vegetable consumption
-  Increase healthy beverage consumption
-  Decrease high energy dense food consumption
-  Increase physical activity
-  Decrease TV and other "screen" time

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Focus Areas

for more information: Wisconsin Department of Health Services • Division of Public Health
Wisconsin Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program • PO Box 2659 • Madison WI 53701-2659
<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/index.htm> • 608.267.3694

Physical Activity Strategies

Physical Activity

1. Provide a total of at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day for all program participants. That total should include:
 - ❖ Structured physical activity (teacher-led) provided to all children for at least 15 minutes
 - ❖ Active (free) play time provided to all children for at least 15 minutes
2. Ensure adequate space is available for both indoor and outdoor physical activity
3. Ensure children are not sedentary for more than 30 minutes except for homework/academic enrichment
4. Break up all sedentary periods with at least 10 minutes of activity
5. During active (free) play time, encourage staff to join children and make positive statements about the activity
6. Ensure regular safety checks on play equipment
7. Encourage staff and children to wear clothing and footwear that are appropriate for being physically active

Indoor Activity

1. Provide a wide variety of portable play equipment (balls, hula-hoops, tumbling mats, rolling carts)
2. Provide indoor play space for activities for inclement weather

Outdoor Activity

1. Ensure outdoor play occurs a minimum of once per day (weather permitting)
2. Provide outdoor play areas that have a shaded space and open, grassy areas that are large enough for group games and different activities

Adaptations for Special Needs

1. Provide a wide variety of equipment, both fixed (such as slides, monkey bars, etc.) and portable, that is appropriate for gross motor activity that is available and accommodates the needs of all children
2. Provide children with special needs alternative opportunities for active play

TV & Screen Time

1. Ensure television is not used during afterschool programs except for educational periods or academic enrichment
2. Limit computer access unless absolutely necessary for homework or academic enrichment
3. Limit or restrict portable video gaming devices within the program



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Nutrition Strategies

Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

1. Serve more fruits & vegetables with meals & snacks. (1 fruit and 2 vegetables in any provided dinners)
2. Ensure canned fruit is offered in its own juice (no syrups)
3. Incorporate a "Fruit and Vegetable of the Week" component to introduce new foods
4. Encourage children to taste or try healthy foods

Healthy Beverage Consumption

1. Provide milk (*non-fat or low-fat, unsweetened or non-flavored*), or water
2. Ensure potable water is readily available

Portion Control

1. Work with your school meal provider to follow Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or USDA guidelines for nutrition and serving sizes
2. Ensure snacks/meals are served family style (children serve themselves with limited help)

High Energy Dense Foods

1. Limit or remove fried or pre-fried potatoes (French fries, tater tots, hash browns) in snacks/meals
2. Limit high-calorie, low-nutrition foods (cookies, cakes, chips, candy, frozen treats, and other sweets) and serve rarely
3. Provide parents/caregivers with guidelines for healthy food and beverage options for celebrations
4. No foods with trans-fat are served

General Nutrition and Physical Activity

Nutrition and Physical Activity Education

1. Ensure nutrition and physical activity education and training is offered to:
 - ❖ Staff: 2 times per year or more, including highlighting new resources/toolkits
 - ❖ Children: 1 time or more per week
 - ❖ Parents/Caregivers: 2 times per year or more (workshops, activities, take-home materials)

Other Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategies

1. Ensure active play time and food are not used as a punishment or reward
2. Establish written guidance limiting foods and beverages allowed from home
3. Establish a written wellness policy including adequate levels of physical activity, adequate fruit and vegetable intake, no sugar-sweetened beverages, and little to no screen time; try to align with school district's school wellness policy
4. Promote physical activity and nutrition by having posters, pictures, or books displayed within all program rooms

Role-Modeling

1. Encourage staff to sit at the table with children and consume the same food and drinks
2. Staff encourage, but do not force, children to eat