

Families being physically active and less screen time is important

Being physically active is essential for young children's development. Physical activity strengthens muscles, but did you know it is also important for brain development? Young children who participate in 60 minutes a day of being physically active tend to maintain a healthy weight and develop strong bones and muscles. Play in the form of physical activity helps improve young children's balance and coordination. Keeping young children active also helps prevent or reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases such as Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Being physically active also improves our mood.

Playing isn't just for children, adults can benefit too! Incorporating physical activity into your day provides physical, mental and social value. Engaging in active play helps young children learn healthy habits for life. Encourage your preschooler to play actively several times every day. The good news is that the 60 minutes doesn't have to happen all at once. It can be in short bursts throughout the day. Setting specific activity times throughout the day or week provides you and your child with a consistent schedule which is easier to keep.

Young children need daily opportunities to use their large muscles, including running, jumping, galloping, skipping, and hopping to develop those large muscle skills. Adults participating with their children promote being physically active.

Some play activities to do inside during bad weather include: acting out a story, dancing to music, playing games such as Duck-Duck-goose, hide and seek or follow the leader. Outdoor play activities are endless such as family walks, playing catch, taking a nature hike, kicking a ball or playing tag.

Just remember to focus on fun, not the performance of the child. Adults and children win if they are moving, having fun and being active daily.

It is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics that screen time, TV time, be limited to less than 2 hours per day. Set a rule that no one in the family including adults can spend longer than 2 hours per day watching TV, playing video games, using tablets or computers for games or social media, except for school work or work. Discuss what time of the day is the best time for screen time and what is appropriate for children and adults. Talk about the benefits of removing TV and screens from bedrooms and only having them in family areas. Instead of screen time, spend time together walking, hiking, playing a sport or other activities such as dancing to music.

Avoid watching TV during mealtimes. This should be time for families to visit about their day.

Lead by example, be a role model and limit your own inactivity. Manage the time you spend on you mobile devices as well. Your children will learn that this is part of a healthy lifestyle if they see you doing it.

Source: Live Eat Play, Colorado State Extension