

Preschoolers on the Go

Preschoolers are busy and active learners. They are learning to master large body movements such as jumping, running, and dancing. They also are exploring their environment through physical movement and play. It is important for children's development to provide them many opportunities to exercise and move their bodies.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Learning Guide: Supporting Child Exercise and Movement

- Make sure regularly scheduled time is provided to encourage active child play and movement (indoors and outdoors). Look at the daily schedule of classroom activities to be certain that enough time is available to encourage children to exercise and move. Are there a variety of activities scheduled that encourage active child play and movement? Consider scheduling one hour of outdoor activity for the morning and afternoon. There are indoor music-and-movement activities scheduled for both the morning and afternoon as well.
- Engage children in movement and exercise as part of everyday activities. Using a physical activity is a great way to support children in transitioning from one activity to another. For example, you could encourage children to waddle like ducks during story time or jump like frogs when it's time to line up for outdoor play.
- Allowing children opportunities to move during an activity helps keep them engaged. Think about times during the day when children need to wait as a large group. Are there songs or finger plays that could be used to engage children in lots of movement while they wait for an activity? Are there enough opportunities for children to move while they are indoors? It's helpful to identify the types of physical movement children are doing, and how you will encourage them to use other types of movement.
- Use music, rhyme, and other activities to encourage child physical movement and exercise. Does the classroom schedule include music, rhyme, and movement activities where all the children are invited to sing and move along to music? For example, the class may start group time by touching toes and stretching arms before sitting down for a shared story book reading. Is there a music-and-movement area in the classroom where children know they can go to listen to music and dance?
- Pay particular attention to children to be sure that the activities match each child's age and development. Is there a need to use assistive technology or adapt an activity as a way to engage a child with a disability to be more active? Think about how each child is currently participating in different physical activities and what might be needed to support him or her in greater participation.



A Quick Peek

Ms. Toni and Mr. Dave teach a class of 4-year-olds. They recently noticed the children have become more fidgety than usual and negative behaviors have increased. The rainy weather the past two weeks hasn't helped the matter. The teachers discuss the dilemma as they prepare the next lesson plan. As they think about when the negative behaviors have occurred, it's usually during transition times or large group activities. They also consider how little outdoor play the children have had recently. Since bad weather is still in the forecast, the teachers decide to provide additional opportunities for the children to be physically active while indoors. The children enjoy pushing large trucks and cars outside, so the teachers bring those items inside and let the children push the toys up and down the hallway. Some of the children really enjoy jumping, so they create a special place for jumping. They add more time and intensity to the daily music and movement activity and incorporate more movement into transitions from one activity to another. It's only been two days, but Ms. Toni and Mr. Dave have already begun to notice an improvement in children's behaviors.

You'll know the practice is working if...

- All children in your classroom are engaged in movement activities throughout the day
- Children get excited about participating in movement activities
- Children are engaged in familiar movements and are acquiring new movement skills

Explore these online resources about supporting physical activity:

- Head Start's [Healthy, Active Living](#) module and resources
- [Infant & Child Physical Activity](#) self-assessment instrument