

NASPE position statement: All children birth to age five should engage in daily physical activity that promotes health-related fitness and movement skills.

Purpose of the Guidelines

Specific guidelines for the physical activity of children birth to five years old were developed to support NASPE's position statement and to address the unique characteristics and needs of the developing child. The guidelines reflect the best thinking of motor development, movement, and exercise physiology specialists about the physical activity needs of young children during the first years of life.

Organization of Guidelines

Five guidelines are listed for each of three age categories: infants (birth to 12 months old), toddlers (12 to 36 months old), and preschoolers (ages 3 to 5 years). The guidelines answer questions about kinds of physical activity, the environment for the physical activity, and the individuals responsible for facilitating the physical activity.

Explanations and discussion of typical activities accompany the listing of the guidelines. Also included is a Frequently Asked Questions section, a glossary of terms, and a comprehensive list of background resources.

Guidelines

Guidelines for Infants:

- Guideline 1.** Infants should interact with parents and/or caregivers in daily physical activities that are dedicated to promoting the exploration of their environment.
- Guideline 2.** Infants should be placed in safe settings that facilitate physical activity and do not restrict movement for prolonged periods of time.
- Guideline 3.** Infants' physical activity should promote the development of movement skills.
- Guideline 4.** Infants should have an environment that meets or exceeds recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Guideline 5.** Individuals responsible for the well-being of infants should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Guidelines for Toddlers:

- Guideline 1.** Toddlers should accumulate at least 30 minutes daily of structured physical activity.
- Guideline 2.** Toddlers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of daily, unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- Guideline 3.** Toddlers should develop movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.
- Guideline 4.** Toddlers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Guideline 5.** Individuals responsible for the well-being of toddlers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Guidelines for Preschoolers:

- Guideline 1.** Preschoolers should accumulate at least 60 minutes daily of structured physical activity.
- Guideline 2.** Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of daily, unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- Guideline 3.** Preschoolers should develop competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.
- Guideline 4.** Preschoolers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Guideline 5.** Individuals responsible for the well-being of preschoolers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.