

Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health

5–17 years old

The scientific evidence available for the age group 5–17 years supports the overall conclusion that physical activity provides fundamental health benefits for children and youth. Appropriate levels of physical activity contribute to the development of:

- healthy musculoskeletal tissues (i.e. bones, muscles and joints);
- healthy cardiovascular system (i.e. heart and lungs);
- neuromuscular awareness (i.e. coordination and movement control); and
- It also facilitates maintenance of a healthy body weight.

Moreover, physical activity has been associated with psychological benefits in young people by: improving their control over symptoms of anxiety and depression; and assisting in social development by providing opportunities for self-expression, building self-confidence, social interaction and integration.

Recommendations:

For children and young people, physical activity includes play, games, sports, transportation, chores, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of family, school, and community activities. The recommendations to improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, and cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers are:

1. Children and youth aged 5-17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate - to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
2. Amounts of physical activity greater than 60 minutes provide additional health benefits.
3. Most of the daily physical activity should be aerobic. Vigorous-intensity activities should be incorporated, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, at least 3 times per week.

These recommendations are relevant to all healthy children aged 5–17 years, unless specific medical conditions indicate to the contrary, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, or income level. Whenever possible, children and youth with disabilities should meet these recommendations. However they should work with their health care provider to understand the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them considering their disability.

If children are currently doing no physical activity, doing amounts below the recommended levels will bring more benefits than doing none at all. They should start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time.

The concept of accumulation refers to meeting the goal of 60 minutes per day by performing activities in multiple shorter bouts spread throughout the day (e.g. 2 bouts of 30 minutes), then adding together the time spent during each of these bouts.

For further information see: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/pa/en/index.html> or contact WHO on dietandhealth@who.int