

Rainy Day Physical Activities for Toddlers and Preschoolers

The Importance of Physical Activity

Physical activity is very important for the health and development of young children and decreases their chance of becoming overweight, obese, or developing other health-related diseases. To meet the physical activity needs of young children, child care professionals should provide structured and unstructured play activities. Children should never be sedentary or sitting in one area for 60 minutes or longer during the day, except during sleep time. It is important that toddlers have at least 30 minutes of structured and at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity on a daily basis. Preschoolers should also have at least 60 minutes of structured and at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity daily. All activities should be fun, exciting, and developmentally appropriate for young children.

Regular physical activity has many benefits for young children.

The benefits include

- developing muscular strength and endurance;
- building and encouraging self-esteem;
- increasing stability;
- building strong muscles, heart, and bones;
- developing object control skills;
- developing locomotor skills;
- enhancing thinking skills;
- developing object, color, and shape recognition; and
- developing cardiovascular endurance.



What to do when outdoor play is unavailable? There are a variety of indoor physical activities to get children moving and having fun. Physical activities range from very simple play for toddlers and infants to more challenging, fun activities for preschoolers and school-age children. Remember to always ensure that all activities are safe and developmentally appropriate for young children when engaging in physical activities.

Indoor Physical Activities for Toddlers

Find the Apple

Find the Apple is a fun scavenger hunt for toddlers. Children will walk and search the classroom for hidden apples.

Materials: Plastic red apples (15-20), basket

Books to Read: *Apples, Apples* by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld

Directions: Hide apples in various places around the room. Children will walk, hop, or crawl around the room looking for the hidden apples. Walk, crawl, and hop with the children, encouraging them to look for the missing apples. As children find the apples, ask them to place them in the basket. This activity could be used with other plastic fruits and vegetables to teach children about healthy foods.



May 2012, continued



Empty the Milk Jug

Empty the Milk Jug is a fun, yet challenging physical activity for toddlers. Children will fill the jug with milk (white clothespins) and shake the jug until it is empty.

Materials: White clothespins (10-15) and 3-5 empty milk jugs

Books to Read: *Moo, Moo Brown Cow! Have You Any Milk?* By Phillis Gershator

Directions: Demonstrate this activity by placing 10-15 clothespins inside an empty milk jug, shaking the jug until a clothespin falls out.

The Sticky Foot Runway

The Sticky Foot is a very simple yet fun game for toddlers. Children will attempt to walk, but the resistance of the walkway will be a challenge.

Materials: 4-6 ft. clear contact paper (2 pieces), duck tape, music, and music player

Books to Read: *Wobble Bear* by Ian Whybrow

Directions: Position the contact paper on the floor with the sticky adhesive side up. Tape the contact paper to the floor to avoid the paper moving or slipping. Assist children with taking their shoes off. Demonstrate and assist children as they walk, dance, and hop across the sticky runway.

Indoor Physical Activities for Preschoolers

Musical Bubble Shapes

Musical Bubbles is a fun and exciting game for young children. Children walk, jump, or dance across bubble wrap as music is played.

Materials: Bubble wrap (24-36 inches wide and 10-15 feet long), duck tape, music, and a musical player

Books to Read: *Shape by Shape* by Suse MacDonald

Directions: Position the bubble wrap on the floor forming two to three shapes, for example a square, diamond, and a triangle. Apply duck tape to secure the wrap from moving or slipping. Discuss the different types of shapes included in this activity with the children. Then explain to

the children the rules of the activity. Demonstrate the activity by walking, jumping, hopping, or dancing across the bubble wrap while the music is playing. When the music stops, stop and tell what shape you are standing on. Repeat the activity and ask the children to join in as you play the music.



Let's Hopscotch

Let's Hopscotch is an activity that enhances balance and strength in young children.

Materials: Duck tape and small bean bag

Books to Read: *Let's Play Hopscotch* by Sarah Hughes

Directions: Draw 10-15 connected boxes with duck tape on the floor or carpet. Demonstrate the activity by throwing a bean bag to land on one of the boxes. Hop through the boxes avoiding the box with the bean bag. At the last box, turn around and return to the beginning. To make it more challenging, add a second bean bag. In larger classes, draw 2 or 3 diagrams for children to participate simultaneously.

The Missing Fruit Game!

The *Missing Fruit* game is an activity that teaches children about different fruits

Materials: Fruit cards (pictures of fruit), plastic fruits (fruit should match the fruit cards)

Books To Read: *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert

Directions: Hide the plastic fruit in the classroom. Show the different fruit cards and explain why it is important to eat fruits daily. Distribute the fruit cards to the children. The only rule to the game is no walking. Children must hop, march, crawl, tiptoe, or ski to find the missing fruit. Demonstrate each action (hop, march, tiptoe, or ski) for the children. As children find the fruit, distribute a new card until all the fruit have been found.

Resources for Physical Activities

There are several great resources for implementing physical activities. Most of the resources provide step by step directions. Below is a list of resources and links to assist in selecting and implementing physical activities.

- Curriculums, Best Practice Guidelines, and Books
 - *Early Steps Physical Education Curriculum: Theory and Practice for Children Under 8* by Evridiki Zachopoulou, Ian Pickup and Niki Tsangaridou
 - *Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children From Birth to Age 5, 2nd Edition* by National Association for Sport and Physical Education - www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalGuidelines/ActiveStart.cfm

- *Ready, Set, Go! Creating and Maintaining a Wellness Environment in Child Care Centers Participating in the CACFP* by National Food Service Management Institute - <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20110126034352.pdf>
 - *Physical Education for Young Children: Movement ABCs for Little One* by Rae Pica
 - Nutrition and Physical Activity Resources by First 5 Association of California - <http://f5ac.org/files/Nutrition%20and%20Physical%20Activity%20Report.pdf>
 - *Healthy Habits for Life* by Nemours, Health and Prevention Services, and KidsHealth.org - <http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/GetMoving.pdf>
 - *SPARK Early Childhood* - <http://www.sparkpe.org/early-childhood/>
- Website
 - Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play - www.headstartbodystart.org
 - FRAC: Child Care Program Wellness Toolkit - <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/child-and-adult-care-program/child-care-wellness-plans-and-policies/>
 - CARE Connection (NFSMI) - <http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=357>
 - Initiatives
 - *Let's Move! Child Care* - <http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/welcome.html>

Creative Tips and Strategies for Implementation on Rainy Days

- Include music and dance.
- Be a role model for children by participating in physical activities with them.
- With the children's help, set up an obstacle course with chairs, cones, balls, and other items. Guide children on how to move through each part of the course so children can gain an understanding of directions in space such as over, under, around, and through.
- Place mats on the floor for tumbling, yoga, and movement. Play cooperative games using hula hoops, streamers, parachutes, and beach balls.
- Role model and demonstrate all activities for children.
- Have a college football player or tennis player to visit the center to talk about physical activity.
- Create a Calendar of Physical Events

Sources

Craft, D. H., Smith, C.L. (2008). *Active play! Fun physical activity for young children*. Cortland, NY: Active Play Books.

Kuffner, T. (1999). *The toddler's busy book*. New York, Ny: Simon and Schuster.

National Association for Sport and Physical Education.(2009). Active start: A statement of physical activity guidelines from birth to age 5, 2nd Edition. Retrieved from <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalGuidelines/ActiveStart.cfm>

National Food Service Management Institute. (2009). *Creating an active, healthy play environment*. CARE Connection: Music, Movement and Play Connection. Retrieved from <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20090827041303.pdf>.

Nutrition Highlights

National Message – *USDA 2010 Dietary Guidelines Communications Message Calendar*

The theme for May to August is Foods to Reduce. During this time, the selected key message is “drink water instead of sugary drinks”. Remember the theme and selected message when planning activities for everyday activities. To obtain more information, follow the link at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/MyPlate/CommunicationsMessageCalendar.pdf>

National Garden Month

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, sponsored by the President’s Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition (PCFSN). During this month, PCFSN promotes the value of physical activity and implementing healthy eating habits. Also during this month, the PCFSN seeks to “engage, educate, and empower all Americans in adopting and living a healthier lifestyle. To obtain more information, follow the link at <http://www.fitness.gov/npfsm/>

NFSMI Trainings

NFSMI has a variety of online child care courses available. All online courses are free of charge and can be accessed at any time. Check out our online courses by following the link: <http://www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?qs=cELEPTIzNg==>



May 2012, continued