

# Fitness Background Basics

Physical activity is very important for everyone. Being active helps your blood circulate through your body and carry fresh oxygen to your muscles and organs. Fresh oxygen improves alertness and helps you feel better.

The MyActivity Pyramid illustrates different types of physical activity including muscle strengthening, aerobic, and lifestyle activities. The guide helps children understand that physical activity is good for their health and how often to do these different types of activities. The top of the pyramid, which is the smallest part, shows inactive pursuits that should be minimized.

The base of the pyramid is lifestyle activities that should be done as often as possible. These activities include playing outside, doing chores around the house or yard, picking up toys and walking. Incorporating physical activity into everyday tasks, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, helps develop fitness. Everyday activities can help you stay flexible and maintain strong muscles and bones.

The next level up on the pyramid is aerobic activity, which should be done everyday. Aerobic activity is vigorous enough to get your heart pumping fast. To maintain and improve health, include aerobic activities.



Children should accumulate at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours, of physical activity on most days. Physical activity should come in short bursts and brief rests over 15-minute intervals — children should not be expected to participate in continuous vigorous physical activity that lasts for extended periods. Physical activity should also be fun! Aerobic activity can be done alone, such as jumping rope, or with a group, such as playing basketball or soccer. Participating in a variety of activities eliminates boredom. Exercising with a friend is a good way to stay motivated to be physically active.





Muscle strengthening is the next level up on the MyActivity Pyramid and should be done three times a week. You can build strength by doing push-ups or sit-ups. Muscle strengthening helps your bones get stronger so you can run and play.

The narrow tip of the pyramid is inactivity, which should be minimized. These activities include watching television, playing on the computer and playing video games. Limit time spent doing these inactive pursuits — try to avoid sitting longer than 60 minutes.

It's so important that children learn to enjoy physical activity and acquire lifelong physical activity behaviors. Spending too much time watching television or on other inactive pursuits prevents learning these habits. And, inactive pursuits often go hand-in-hand with snacking, which can further harm children by leading to excess weight gain. Give your child the gift of physical activity!

## MyActivity Pyramid

Be physically active at least 60 minutes every day, or most days.  
Use these suggestions to help meet your goal:

Lifestyle Activities	Aerobic	Muscle Strengthening	Inactivity
As often as possible	3-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	Cut down
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing outside</li> <li>• Helping with chores around the house or yard</li> <li>• Taking the stairs instead of the elevator</li> <li>• Picking up toys</li> <li>• Walking</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing basketball</li> <li>• Biking</li> <li>• Playing baseball or softball</li> <li>• Rollerblading</li> <li>• Skateboarding</li> <li>• Playing soccer</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Playground games</li> <li>• Jumping rope</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing martial arts</li> <li>• Rope climbing</li> <li>• Stretching</li> <li>• Practicing yoga</li> <li>• Doing push-ups and pull-ups</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching television</li> <li>• Playing on the computer</li> <li>• Sitting for too long</li> <li>• Playing video games</li> </ul> 

### Find your balance between food and fun:

- Move more. Aim for at least 60 minutes every day, or most days.
- Walk, dance, bike, rollerblade – it all counts. How great is that!