

Benefits of Active Play for Young Children

ACTIVE PLAY is anything that encourages and provides children with opportunities for physical development through movement. It can occur indoors or out, it can be structured or unstructured, it can be with friends, family, care providers or alone.



Why is active play so important to development?

Physically active play in the early years is a very important part of development that helps young children grow intellectually, emotionally and physically.

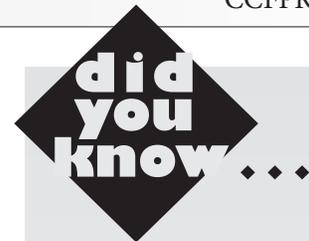
When children engage and participate in active play, they are:

1. Developing social competencies
2. Learning about decision making and problem solving
3. Building confidence, self awareness and self esteem
4. Using their imaginations and creativity
5. Improving coordination
6. Working their bodies
7. Just plain having fun!

Why is active play so important to health and longevity?

Lifestyle choices made early on, affect health and well-being now, as well as in the future. Poor choices, including an unhealthy diet and sedentary behavior, are contributing factors to many health problems including becoming overweight or obese. Additional health problems associated with being overweight include, but are not limited to, depression, stress, diabetes, heart disease, respiratory problems, high blood pressure, stroke, arthritis, cancer and dying prematurely. Given the vast array of information we now know about these diseases and their connection with being overweight, it is more important than ever to start children off on the best path.

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- ▶ You can download an iPhone app to use when shopping for produce <http://harvest-app.com/>. This is a great guide to selecting and storing the freshest, healthiest and best tasting produce.
- ▶ At approximately \$2 for a 20-ounce container, bottled water costs about 2,000 times more than tap water.
- ▶ Nationwide spending on bottled water in 2008 totaled more than \$11 billion.
- ▶ Almost half (47.8 percent) of bottled water sold commercially is purified tap water.
- ▶ Bottled water, which has been found to contain unregulated chemical pollutants and contaminants, is not safer than tap water.
- ▶ Millions of barrels of oil are used annually to produce and ship plastic water bottles; only 10 percent of them are recycled.
- ▶ Sixty-three percent of Americans favor a bottled beverage tax to support clean water.

Quotable Quotes

“*Play is the work of children. It's very serious stuff.*”

— Bob Keeshan

INSIDE:

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- ◆ Peanuts to Peanut Butter
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- ◆ Recipes

Benefits of Active Play for Young Children

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The physical part of active play helps to **increase**:

- Aerobic capacity and maintenance of a healthy weight
- Flexibility
- Strength and endurance
- Bone mass

Active play also **lowers**:

- Blood pressure
- Fat and cholesterol levels in the blood
- Weight and body fat
- Feelings of anxiety, stress and depression
- The risk of some cancer and diseases

If that isn't enough, active play keeps your heart healthy and strong, provides social experiences, supports good sleep, and improves academic performance and overall quality of life.

What are the recommendations for Active Play?

Like adults, children should be encouraged and be given the opportunity for active play every day of the week for at least 30–60 minutes a day. Children play actively in spurts and should be given multiple opportunities throughout

the day to engage in both structured and unstructured activities.

How can all children be included in Active Play?

Opportunities for active play help all children learn and develop, regardless of their abilities. Successful inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities can have its challenges, but by adopting an attitude of acceptance, all children should be given the opportunity, supported and encouraged to participate in active play at their own level (R. McCall and D. Craft, 2000). There is a wide range in abilities of infants, toddlers and young children so activities should be tailored to the child—concentrating on actions rather than outcomes. Provide young children with a safe, accessible play environment that is age appropriate and supportive to their development.

To learn more about the great benefits of active play and physical activity visit the My Pyramid website at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/PhysicalActivity/index.html>

— *Child Care Mealtime and Active Play Partnerships*
University of Idaho
www.cals.uidaho/mealtimeandactiveplay

It's Summertime and the Playing Is Easy

What's there to do when there's nothing to do? That's easy, play!

- Let children “help” with housekeeping chores, sweep, dust, clean the windows, fold clothes
- Ask for help in the kitchen, washing fruits and vegetables, preparing snacks for the group, washing dishes
- Take a field trip to a “pick your own” fruit farm
- Try imaginary fun, circuses, talent shows, short skits, play grocery store or post office
- Ball play, how many different balls can you play catch with, bounce or roll back and forth. Punch beach balls in the air to keep them from falling to the ground
- Set up a water table, play painting the house with large paint brushes and buckets of water or help wash the car
- Play music and dance using props such as ribbons, scarves, capes and dress up clothes
- Lend a hand in the garden, weeding, raking, watering
- Have fun in the sprinklers on a warm afternoon
- Choose teams and compete in a backyard obstacle course or in potato sack or wheel barrel races
- Play a wild life version of follow-the-leader, pretend to be an elephant stomping through the jungle or a crocodile slithering through the mud
- Do some yoga or stretching on the grass
- Play tag, hide and go seek, tug of war or hopscotch
- Turn a walk into a scavenger hunt. Look for moss, a lady bug, clover, a brightly colored leaf
- Enjoy a playground at a school or a park, take frisbees, hacky sacks or fly a kite

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Self Assessment and Best Practices in Child Care

GIVING CHILDREN THE VERY BEST START in life includes feeding them nutritious meals and giving them many opportunities to be physically active every day. When nutritious food and physical activity are a normal everyday occurrence, healthy habits are formed that last a lifetime. Over the past three years the Child Health and Nutrition Program was funded by the Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund and the *Network for a Healthy California* from USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, to develop a Self Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) and a Best Practices Manual. The project's purpose is to assist child care providers through the process of developing and implementing comprehensive written nutrition and physical activity policies.



The Atkins Center for Weight and Health at the University of California, Berkeley evaluated the project in 2010 with 50 pilot family child care homes in Napa, Marin, Sonoma and San Bernardino counties. They determined the effectiveness of the SAQ and CACFP monitor intervention in promoting healthy eating and physical activity practices. A follow up survey was administered to all child care sites to gather more in-depth information about the nature of the practices that had changed over the course of the six-month intervention period. Research findings showed significant improvement in the following areas:

The SAQ is a list of thirty-five “best practices” for nutrition and physical activity in child care environments. The four sections address feeding practices, foods served, physical activity and staff/parent training.

The Best Practices Manual has three sections for each best practice listed on the SAQ. The *best practices* section states the ideal standard supporting the practice, the *rationale* section states the reasons why these best practices exist and the *talking points* section can be used to convince staff/parents about the importance of implementing nutrition and physical activity policies.

Over 1000 child care centers and homes have attended workshops or have been trained on how to conduct a child care site self assessment, helping child care homes and centers compare their nutrition and physical activity practices with recommended guidelines. By completing the questionnaire, programs can determine what they are doing well and explore which practices they need to improve. The process of completing the child care site self assessment validates the good work that the center or home is already doing and motivates them to consider making a change in guidelines or policy to improve their child care environment.

- Parents received written nutrition policies

- Parents informed about what children eat and menus posted
- Parents provided guidelines on sending food from home
- Children served themselves at mealtimes
- Adults sat down with children at mealtimes
- Children ages 2 years and up served milk lower in fat
- Parents informed about their child's physical activity
- Parents received written physical activity policies for the child care setting
- Parents received more information on physical activities to do at home and information on child nutrition.

The Self Assessment Questionnaire and Best Practices Manual have proven to be instruments for change in promoting quality nutrition and physical activity in child care environments.

Both the SAQ and the Best Practices Manual will soon be available on the Contra Costa Child Care Council website – www.cocokids.org. For more information, please contact Kitty Lenhart (kitty.lenhart@cocokids.org) or Mary Ann Ferrera (maryann.ferrera@cocokids.org.)

Eggplant Parmesan

Eggplant, thinly sliced	2	Marinara sauce, divided	5 cups
Eggs, beaten	2	Mozzarella cheese, shredded and divided	1 lb
Seasoned bread crumbs	2 cups	Parmesan cheese, grated and divided	1 cup
Basil, dried	1 tsp		
Olive oil	¼ cup		

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Dip eggplant slices in egg and then in bread crumbs mixed with basil. Place in a single layer on olive oil coated baking sheets. Drizzle with remaining olive oil. Bake for 5 minutes on each side.
2. In a 9 by 13 inch pan spread one half of the marinara sauce. Place a layer of eggplant slices in the sauce. Sprinkle with one half of each of the cheeses. Repeat with other half of the ingredients, ending with cheese.
3. Turn oven down to 350°F and bake for 35 minutes until golden brown.

Yield: 10 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable and protein/meat alternate

— Allrecipes.com

Zucchini Fritters

Zucchini (2 med)	1 lb
Zest of one lemon	
Parsley, chopped	¼ cup
Garlic, minced	1 clove
Salt	1 tsp
Pepper	¼ tsp
Eggs, beaten	2
Flour	½ cup
Olive oil	6 Tbsp
Fresh lemon wedges	

1. Grate zucchini into a medium bowl. Add lemon zest, parsley, garlic, salt pepper and eggs. Mix well to combine. Slowly add flour, stirring so no lumps form.
2. Heat 2 Tbsp olive oil in a non stick skillet over medium heat. Carefully drop small spoonfuls of zucchini mixture, into the oil spacing the fritters a few inches apart. Add additional olive oil as needed to fry remainder.
3. Sauté the fritters until golden brown, about 2–3 minutes on each side. Serve with fresh lemon wedges.

Yield: 6 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable

— University of Rhode Island Family Nutrition Program

Activity Corner

PEANUTS TO PEANUT BUTTER!*

Children will love participating in this simple, delicious activity. All you will need is a bag of peanuts, peanut oil and a food processor.



To get started have all children wash their hands and come to the table.

Let children shell peanuts, collecting peanuts in one bowl and the shells in another, until their attention begins to stray. Next let the children watch while all the peanuts are put in the food processor with a small amount of peanut oil. Blend for several minutes, adding more oil as needed. When the peanut butter is the right consistency get out the crackers and plastic knives for the children to sample their creation!

*Do not do this activity if **any** child in care has a peanut allergy.

This Nutrition Edition is brought to you by:



Child Development Associates
Nutrition Program
180 Otay Lakes Road, Suite 300
Bonita, CA 91902

and is produced by:

**Contra Costa Child Care Council
Child Health & Nutrition Program**

Phone: (925) 676-6117 Fax: (925) 676-5829

E-Mail: nutrition@cocokids.org

Website: www.CoCoKids.org

Program Director Paula James

Co-Editor Donna Green, RD

Co-Editor Catherine Stafford

Food Q: What fruit always travels in groups of twos?
Funny A: Pears!