

Physical Activities and Healthy Snacks for Young Children

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Pick a **better** snack



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Go for the **good** stuff



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Physical Activities and Healthy Snacks for Young Children

This program to promote the 2000 Dietary Guidelines is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education Bureau of Food and Nutrition, Iowa Team Nutrition, Iowa Public Television, Iowa State University Extension, and Iowa State University Department of Health and Human Performance. The project was funded by a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. The snack cards were prepared by Laura Sands, R.D., L.D. (Iowa Department of Education) and the activity cards were prepared by Katherine Thomas Thomas, Ph.D. (Department of HHP, Iowa State University).

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Why is physical activity included in the Dietary Guidelines?



Research shows that adults who are physically active reduce their health risk. Active adults report having learned motor and sport skills as children. Confidence and skill carry-over from childhood into adulthood, increases the chance of an active adult lifestyle.

During childhood, nutrition and physical activity work together to create healthy bones. Both weight-bearing physical activity and good nutrition are necessary for healthy bones. Children who are inactive (sedentary) tend to remain inactive. Childhood inactivity may contribute to childhood obesity.

Finally, motor skills and physical activity are important in our culture.

"Be physically active" is one of four Team Nutrition messages.

Principles

The following principles were used to develop the activities on the cards:

- Children are naturally active, therefore we are fostering a normal behavior by using the activities on these cards.
- Each child is unique. Differences in motor skill within and between children are normal. This means that a child may find some skills easier than other skills. Each child will find some skills easy and other skills more difficult.
- Boys and girls are more alike than different when doing physical activities.
- Motor skills develop as a result of practice.
- Children participate in sport and physical activity to have fun, learn skills and be with their friends.



*T*eaching Tips

Position yourself so you can see all the children.

Use a signal to get the children's attention. Teach the children to stop and listen when you give the signal.

Have a few simple rules, for example:

- listen and do
- hands to yourself
- be kind
- be careful

Use activities and equipment developed for the age and skill level of the children.

How to use these cards

Title →

Zig Zag Toss Across

1 bean bag

Arrange the children in two lines facing each other.



Description of the game or activity ▶

The first child tosses the bean bag to the child across from them. That child tosses it to the next child in the opposite line, this continues till the bean bag gets to the end of the line. The last child runs to the first position in his/her line (if the lines are uneven in number have the child go to the end of the opposite line) and start the tossing again. Repeat.

Teaching hints ↗

Hint: Say the name of the child tossing and catching so they are both ready before a toss. "Chris, you are going to toss to Alex, Alex get ready to catch."

Check the equipment before you begin so you can gather the materials you need for the activity

Placement of the children is described and shown in a figure. Small x represents the children, large smiley represents the teacher



Tubby Toes

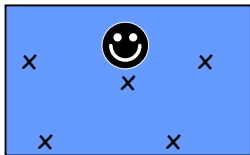
Arrange the children in scatter formation.

The children follow and sing or chant with you. They touch the body part as they say the words.

Sing or chant the following words: "Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes" (a bit faster on knees and toes the second time) "watch how fast the Tubby goes, Tubby goes" (run in a circle). Repeat.



No equipment



Animal Walks

No equipment.



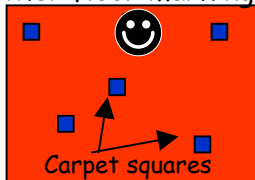
Arrange the children in a long line facing you.

Ask the children “who can show me how (insert animal name) walks”? If a child volunteers allow them to demonstrate. If what the child does is close to the description, have the other children copy. If the demonstration is not close, ask if anyone can think of another way to show how that animal might walk. You can also demonstrate or cue by using the descriptions below. Repeat with the animals running, with each child selecting their favorite, adding their own animals and so forth.

- Kangaroo (jumping while holding hands near chest with fingers forward)
- Monkey (walking with hands on ground)
- Bear (lumbering so that hand and foot on the same side go forward together)
- Pony (galloping or trotting with all fours)
- Giraffe (lift arms above head pretending this is the neck and head, then slide to move across the area)
- Squirrel (running, darting and dodging, quick head movements during short stops)

Airplanes

Carpet squares or other floor markings
(tape, newspaper).



Arrange half the children in scatter formation on the carpet squares.

The remaining children will be scattered among the carpet squares. The children on the carpet squares are "skyscrapers". Explain this to them (e.g., tall buildings). They can sway but can't move their feet. Arms must be at their sides or above their heads.



The children scattered among the skyscrapers are airplanes. They move carefully among the buildings with wings spread. The airplanes can't stop moving and must not touch the buildings or each other. Airplanes should fly (run or jog).

Repeat reversing roles of skyscrapers and buildings.

Zig Zag Toss Across

1 bean bag

Arrange the children in two lines facing each other.



The first child tosses the bean bag to the child across from them. That child tosses it to the next child in the opposite line, this continues until the bean bag gets to the end of the line. The last child runs to the first position in his/her line (if the lines are uneven in number have the child go to the end of the opposite line) and start the tossing again. Repeat.

Hint: Say the name of the child tossing and catching so they are both ready before a toss. "Chris, you are going to toss to Alex. Alex get ready to catch."

Hop, Jump and Dance Like Betsy

No equipment.

Arrange the children in a long line facing you.



Betsy is a frog in the book "Hop, Jump" (by Ellen S. Walsh, 1993, Harcourt, Brace & Co). This activity copies Betsy's movements, and allows the children to create movements of their own. Betsy watches the other frogs hop and jump, but she wants to try other movements. At first the other frogs say "no room for dancing", but after watching her they try dancing and like it. Then they say "no room for hopping and jumping", but Betsy tells us there is room for everyone.

Begin by jumping forward (jumping is with both feet at the same time). Try short quick jumps, long jumps and jumps up into the air.

Next try hopping (jumping on one foot at a time, several hops at a time). Repeat on the other foot.

Betsy leaped (long running step) and did twisting and turning. Show the children leaping, have them try. Repeat with several turns.

Betsy and the frogs began to dance combining jumps, hops, turns, leaps and other movements. Expand by having everyone hop-jump while one person dances, reverse.

Jump the Line

Equipment: Lines
(string, chalk or tape)

Arrange the children so each child is on a line.

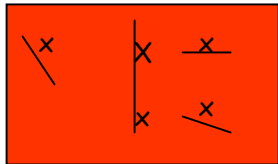
Jump with both feet down (along) the line.

Jump over the line, turn and jump back over the line, repeat.

Jump from side to side over the line.

Jump forward and backward over the line.

Jump high over the line.



Repeat several times.



Allow children to demonstrate or lead jumping by selecting one of the ways to jump.

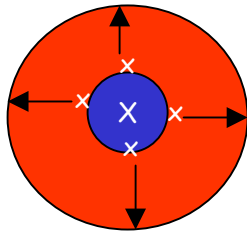
Expand: Arrange children in a line, the first child is the leader who selects a way of jumping. The other children follow. You can be the leader too.

Toss Up

Arrange the children on the small circle with you in the middle.

Each child should have a "special spot" (their own spot) on the large and small circles. Practice moving from the special spot on the small circle to the special spot on the large circle. Practice moving back to the small circle from the larger circle. You will count "one, two, three" aloud and after "three" say one of the children's names. As you say a child's name toss the ball into the air (straight up). The child whose name you called runs to the center and catches the ball. The other children run to their special spot on the outside circle. Once the center child has gained control of the ball, you move to the small circle as do all the other children. The game continues until all children have been in the center. Repeat.

One 6-8 inch foam ball.
Marking for circle (polyspots, chalk)



*P*encil Roll, Inch Worm and Rocker

No equipment.

Mats helpful.

If you are using mats, arrange one line at each mat. If you are on carpet or grass allow 1-3 children to go at time. Allow children to practice as you give instructions, then repeat each activity as time allows.

The pencil roll begins with the child laying flat on his/her back, arms extended overhead (the arms can also be crossed on chest or held straight at sides). Keeping the body straight like a pencil or log, roll onto the stomach. Continue moving front to back. Be sure the children roll in a straight line. Repeat several times.

The Inch Worm begins standing with feet together and legs as straight as possible. While holding the feet still, the child "walks" the hands forward until the body is straight. Then holding the hands still, the child walks the feet toward the hands. Repeat until a specific distance has been covered (for example 10 feet).

The Rocker begins with the child laying on her/his back. Bend the legs bringing the legs toward the chest. Hug the knees with both arms. By moving the head forward and backward rock the body as vigorously as possible.

Blast-off

Arrange the children in a line on one side of a rectangle facing the other side of the rectangle.

The rocket launcher counts backward, "5,4,3,2,1 blast-off".

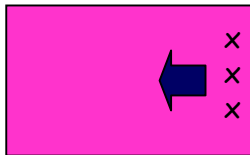
"Blast off" is the signal to run as quickly as possible to the opposite side of the rectangle. The adult should be the first rocket launcher. Select a child to be the next rocket launcher. Help the child count and say blast-off if necessary. Play the game until everyone has been the rocket launcher. Repeat.



No equipment



Rocket launcher



Reveille

No equipment.

Arrange the children in a line on one side of a rectangle.



Captain → X



Upon a signal by the ship's captain the children will run to the other side of the rectangle and stop on a line. They should stand very tall, straight and still. The children should salute the captain. The captain then says "dismissed" and the children say "aye, aye, captain" and return to the first line. The captain selects a new captain and the game continues so that all children have at least one turn as captain.

Seven Jumps

Music¹.

Arrange the children in a circle, they can hold hands facing right which will have them move counterclockwise.

Move around the circle (slide, skip, gallop, fast walk or run). Stop the music. Everyone will touch one knee to the floor for 10 counts, then stand. Start the music and move in the opposite direction around the circle. Stop the music. Touch one knee to the floor for 5 counts, the other knee touches the floor for 10 counts, then stand. Start the music and move the opposite direction. This continues, each round add a body part as follows:

- knee
- other knee
- elbow
- other elbow
- stomach
- back
- forehead



¹ There is music for Seven Jumps from many sources for example Circle Dances for Today (KEA 1146C Kimbo Educational, 2001). However, you can use any music which is lively for example a polka, two step or march.

Locomotor Skills

Arrange the children in scatter formation so all children can see you.

Locomotor skills are walking, running, jumping, hopping, galloping, sliding and skipping. Hopping is a jump taking off from one foot and landing on that foot. In galloping the same foot is always in the front (leading). Skipping is step-hop, step-hop.



Have the children move around the area using each skill. Emphasize moving under control, so children don't fall or bump into each other. Begin with walking, then progress to running, jumping and so forth. The skills listed become progressively more difficult. You may have to help by holding a child's hand hopping or demonstrating and practicing sliding, galloping or skipping. Children begin these skills at the following ages: walk (12 mo.), run, hop & jump (24 mo.), gallop, slide & skip (36 mo.).

No Equipment.



Parachute

A parachute, sheet or blanket.

Space the children around the edge of the parachute or other sturdy fabric (for example a sheet). Spread out adults among the children, if there is more than one adult.

Everyone should stand facing the center and grasp the parachute with both hands. First, hold the parachute still by not moving the hands or arms. Next wiggle the parachute using small arm and hand movements. Do this for 30 seconds and stop. Try big wiggles by moving the arm and shoulders up and down for 30 seconds then stop. Switch back and forth between big and little wiggles for 60 seconds.

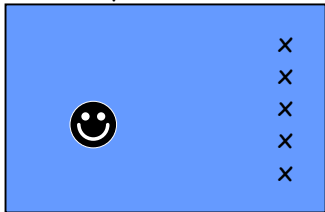
Raise the parachute above the children's heads, then lower it to waist height. Repeat this several times. Raise the parachute again, but lower it to the ground. Repeat several times. When the parachute is raised high have a child you name run under and then back to his/her original position. Repeat until all children have had a turn. Expand by having the child run around the outside and back to her/his place.

Throw and Fetch



Arrange the children in a line facing you.

One object (bean bag, ball, crushed paper sack) per child.



The children throw (overhand) the object as far as possible. On your signal all the children run and pick-up their object. Children return to the starting position and repeat.

Emphasize throwing far and waiting for your signal before going after the objects.

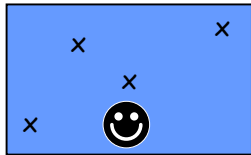
Hint: Taking a large step during the throw will increase the distance the object goes so encourage children to take a big step.

Moving to Music



Arrange the children in scatter formation.

Music the children like.



Describe sharp movements as a way to move the body to make lines, corners and angles. Demonstrate by making your arms straight then angled by rapidly and forcefully bending your elbows. Ask the children to move their arms in sharp movements. Ask the children to move other body parts with sharp movements (ankles, waist, hands).

Describe smooth movements as a way to move that has circles, turns and doesn't stop. Demonstrate by swinging your arms in circles. Ask the children to move their arms in smooth movements. Ask the children to move their whole body in smooth movements as you demonstrate turning, bending, swaying--all smoothly.

Turn on the music and ask the children to move to the music. Remind the children to move using smooth or sharp movements.



Turtle and Rabbit

No equipment.



Arrange the children in scatter formation.

Explain that turtles move slowly and rabbits move very fast. Ask the children to move slow. Once they can demonstrate slow, ask them to demonstrate fast.

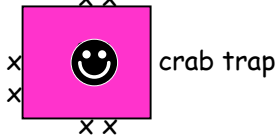
To play the game you will call out  "turtle" or  "rabbit". When you say "turtle" the children move slowly and continuously until you say "rabbit". When you say "rabbit" the children move fast until you say "turtle". Repeat alternating "rabbit" and "turtle".

Focus the children on listening and following directions. The point of the game is for the children to move all the time (either fast or slow).

Happy Crabs

Divide the children equally and arrange them on three of the four sides of a large square.

No equipment.



Crabs move by walking sideways on their long and bent legs. The children are going to pretend to be crabs. Begin by sitting on the ground with legs extended, knees bent and feet on the ground. Arms are extended behind with hands on the ground. Lift bottom off the floor and by "walking" hands and feet move forward, sideward and backward.

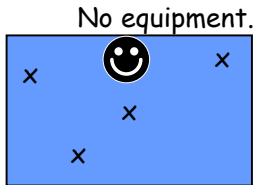


Name each side of the square a color (blue crabs, white crabs, silver crabs). The open side of the square is the crab trap. You will say "Blue crabs to the crab trap" and the blue crabs will crab walk to the open side. Continue by moving the white crabs around the square to the new open "traps". Repeat.

Non-locomotor Skills

Arrange the children in scatter formation.

Remind the children to stay in their special spot (where they are). Non-locomotor skills are movements which are done without changing locations. Generally, feet are still. Non-locomotor skills can usually be done with one body part (the arm) or the whole body. Ask the children to do the following movements, if they do not know what to do, demonstrate.



- twist
- sway
- wiggle
- bend
- stretch
- swing
- balance
- lean
- curl
- shake

Vary the movement by asking them to move only one arm or leg instead of the whole body.



Hint: Chalk lines, tape marks, carpet squares or polypots (plastic spots, available at school supply stores) help children find and stay in their special spot.

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Circus Elephants

Mats, carpet squares or a soft surface.

Arrange the children in a scatter formation on a soft surface.

Present the following balance challenges.

If the children do not understand, demonstrate. Balance on:

One foot

The other foot

One hand and one foot

Two hands and one foot

Switch to the other foot and two hands

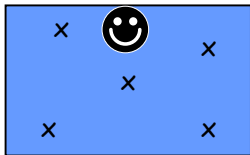
Head and two feet

Elbow and one foot

Knees (no feet!)

One knee

Seat (bottom)



Hint: To challenge older children, ask "can you think of other ways to balance?" or switch quickly from one to another of the challenges. Repeat.

High, Medium, Low and Sneaky Snake

Arrange the children in a long line facing you.

No equipment.



Begin by explaining the difference between high and low. Moving "high" is tall, for example when we move up on our toes. Demonstrate by walking high (on your toes) and have the children practice. Moving "low" is short, for example when we move bending down. Demonstrate and have the children practice. Medium is between high and low. Medium is the way we usually move. Demonstrate and have the children practice.

Most skills can be done high, medium or low. Ask the children to do the following skills at high, medium and low levels: run, jump, hop, slide, gallop (so that high, medium and low hopping one after the other), balance, turn, and wiggle. Remember hopping is jumping on one foot. Now pick from one level (for example "low") and vary the skill (e.g., slide, wiggle, hop). Switch quickly from one to the other, keeping the children moving. "Sneaky snake" is the lowest of all, it is when you crawl (belly on the floor). Add sneaky snake to the skills you are varying (e.g., "skip high, wiggle medium, sneaky snake, run high")

Hint: Tell the children to move from one line or area to a specific place as they practice (for example, to the opposite line).

Paper Bag Derby

One paper grocery sack per child.

Arrange the children on tile or grass
(a slick surface) in small groups.



When you say "start your engines" children should make engine noise (Hurmph, humm, brummmm). When you say "the race is on", children scoot themselves around the race track on their sacks (by holding the sides of the sacks and pushing or pulling with the feet). The race track is defined by you. Put the kids into groups to spread them out. Your hand is the caution flag. Use it to stop the race if children get too bunched up. Then restart the race. Everyone wins each time they go around the track and back to their starting place.

Red Light, Green Light

Arrange the children on a long line facing you.



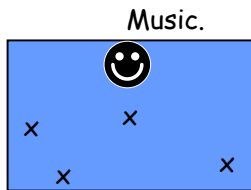
A stop and go sign is helpful.



Begin by explaining the signals for stop ("red light") and go ("green light"). Have one child demonstrate stopping when you signal. The object of the game is to move from one side of a rectangle to the other side. However, children can move only when you say go and must stand very still when you say stop. During the go ("green light") signal children should move as quickly as possible! Once all children reach the opposite side they wait for your signal. Upon your signal they walk back to the start. The game begins again. To make the game more challenging for older children, try changing signals often and quickly or use only the stop/go sign. For younger children use both a visual (the sign or your hand) and verbal signal (saying "green light" or "red light").

Shake, Punch and Roll

Arrange the children in scatter formation. Stand where all children can see you.



The movements for this work-out are shaking (a leg, one arm, two arms, or your head), punching arms alternately forward (vigorously extend and bend arms with fists held the whole time) and rolling (lay on the ground or floor, roll from back to stomach and back).

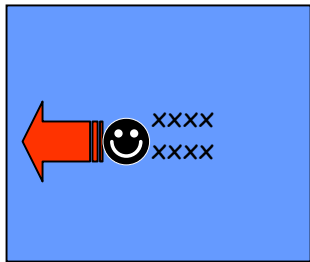
Do each movement at least 8 times to the music (for 8 to 16 counts depending on the music). For younger children repeat each movement more times, for older children change the type of movement more often. Running in place can be inserted between shakes, punches and rolls.

Hint: Select music the children enjoy.

*F*itness March

Marching music.

Arrange the children in 1-2 lines facing front.



Play the music and march. Encourage high steps with the knees lifted up on each step. Encourage moving the arms vigorously in a pattern opposite to the legs. Begin with you as the leader. March around the area in various patterns (lines, zig zags, circles, etc.). Then allow a child to be the leader. Switch leaders often.

Run Rabbit Run

Recommended for children 4 years and older.



The rabbits quietly move out of their den to search for "food". They gather the food by picking up the bean bags. Foxes are identified by the sock or foam ball they carry. The foxes are asleep in their fox hole. When the fox(es) wakes up he smells the rabbits and says "run, rabbit, run". The rabbits run back to their den with any food they have gathered. If the fox touches a rabbit with the sock or foam ball, the rabbit becomes a fox. The fox returns to his hole and goes back to sleep. It is safe for the rabbits to search for food again by leaving their dens. Once all of the food is gathered the game starts again with a new fox. Repeat until all children have had at least one turn to be fox. If necessary cue the fox to wake up.

Bean bags or other pretend food.
Stuffed socks or foam balls.
Tape or markers.

