



Bright Futures™

prevention and health promotion for infants,
children, adolescents, and their families™

The Bright Futures Guidelines,
Third Edition
Health Promotion Information Sheet

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, Third Edition features 10 health promotion themes. These state-of-the-art discussions focus on topics of key importance to families and health care professionals in their common mission to promote the health and well-being of children from birth through adolescence. These 10 themes are also woven into the 31 health supervision visits.



What you'll find in the "Promoting Physical Activity" chapter

Overview: Setting the stage

Physical activity is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, and it must begin in infancy and extend through adulthood. Regular physical activity increases lean body mass, muscle and bone strength, and promotes good physical health. It fosters psychological well-being, can increase self-esteem and capacity for learning, and it can help children and adolescents handle stress. Families should emphasize physical activity early in a child's life, because, as children mature, modern culture provides many temptations to adopt a sedentary lifestyle.

In-depth: Exploring the topic

This chapter provides focused discussions on physical activity for children and youths with special needs and the growing problem of physical inactivity among children and adolescents. It also examines the topic from the perspective of each of the four major developmental stages, and provides evidence on the effectiveness of relevant health promotion interventions.

Infancy: Birth to 11 Months

A primary reason for promoting physical activity during early childhood is to assist young children in mastering basic motor skills. Engaging young children in all forms of physical activity promotes the joy of movement, the sense of control, and the ability to navigate the body through space, while contributing to optimal bone development.



Early Childhood: 1 to 4 Years

A primary reason for promoting physical activity during early childhood is to assist young children in mastering basic motor skills. Engaging young children in all forms of physical activity promotes the joy of movement, the sense of control, and the ability to navigate the body through space, while contributing to optimal bone development.

Middle Childhood: 5 to 10 Years

As children grow and develop, their motor skills increase, giving them an opportunity to participate in a variety of physical activities. Parents should encourage their children to be physically active and should be active with them. Other family members, peers, teachers, and people in the media also can be influential. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends that children and adolescents engage in 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous activity on most, if not all, days.



Adolescence: 11 to 21 Years

Participating in regular physical activity helps adolescents develop skills and pastimes they can enjoy throughout their lives. It also has numerous physical and psychological benefits. Avoiding the use of performance-enhancing substances and preventing injury are two important considerations in physical activity for adolescents.



How the theme of “Promoting Physical Activity” fits into Bright Futures visits

Each Bright Futures health supervision visit is structured around *five priority topics* that help focus the health care professional’s guidance to parents and children. Some priorities are unique to a particular visit; others are featured often and their components evolve in concert with the child’s development.

These examples of priorities, taken from selected visits, show how Bright Futures helps health care professionals talk to families about promoting physical activity during each developmental stage:

Infancy: 4 Month Visit

Infant development, including consistent daily routines; sleep issues (such as crib safety and sleep location); parent-child relationship-building through play and tummy time, and; infant self-regulation, including social development and self-calming

Early Childhood: 3 Year Visit

Promoting physical activity and placing limits on inactivity

Middle Childhood: 7 and 8 Year Visits

Nutrition and physical activity, including healthy weight; appropriate food intake; adequate calcium; drinking water instead of soda; adequate physical activity in organized sports or other after-school programs or activities, and; limits on screen time

Middle Adolescence: 15 to 17 Year Visits

Physical growth and development issues, such as physical and oral health, body image, healthy eating, and physical activity

Additional Resources on Promoting Physical Activity

- American Academy of Pediatrics aap.org
- HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics healthychildren.org
- Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration mchb.hrsa.gov
- Family Voices IMPACT on Health & Wellness for Families fv.impact.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Physical Activity cdc.gov
- Society of Health and Physical Educators shapeamerica.org
- President’s Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition fitness.gov

Bright Futures is a national health care promotion and disease prevention initiative that uses a developmentally-based approach to address children’s health needs in the context of family and community.

Bright Futures Health Promotion Themes

Family Support	Physical Activity
Child Development	Oral Health
Mental Health	Safety and Injury Prevention
Healthy Weight	Community Relationships and Resources
Healthy Nutrition	Healthy Sexual Development and Sexuality

*To learn more about Bright Futures,
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