

# GRAB AND GO LESSON

## Strategies for Incorporating Physical Activity in Child Care

### Health and Safety

**Purpose:** This handout provides an overview of the importance of physical activity in early childhood and some strategies for including a variety of opportunities in child care settings.

Each day, preschoolers should have at least two hours and toddlers should have at least one hour of physical activity; infants should have various opportunities for “tummy time.” Providing these minimum and daily opportunities for physical activity is an important part of offering quality child care. Physical activity promotes a healthy weight, motor skill development, and strong bones. It is also known to help children have better sleep habits, better concentration and attention spans, and improved social skills. Fortunately, physical activity in child care settings can include a variety of different activities.

### Ways to Include Physical Activity

Incorporating physical activity in a daily schedule begins with observing current activities. Begin by reviewing your daily schedule to determine the number of times physical activity opportunities are encouraged and provided. See if the activities equal the recommended amount of time for each age group. Then, identify ways to add more physical activity in the daily schedule.

There are many different ways to enhance indoor and outdoor physical activity experiences that include organizing time for each type of activity and providing a variety of experiences to keep children interested. Some examples include walking, running, climbing, dancing, and jumping. Be sure that outside areas provide safe and age-appropriate opportunities for climbing and jumping. Also, be sure that age-appropriate play equipment such as balls, hoops, and tricycles are available for outdoor play.

### Classroom Ideas

There are many opportunities to include physical activity in classroom. Consider visiting a website such as *Healthy Kids Healthy Future* for ideas on how to increase physical activity. Keep in mind that physical activity does not have to be a separately planned event. It can be included in many ways throughout the day.

A great way to get children to increase activity is to dance, skip, or jump with music playing. Make it a game and encourage children to “freeze” (stop moving) when the music stops. Play this game several times adding your creative twist to make it more interesting and appealing to children.

Another example would be to include rhyme and movement, or some type of body movement in routines that usually call for sitting still, such as circle activities (daily calendar, weather reporting, etc.). Follow the Leader, Simon Says, and Musical Chairs are great options to get children moving.

Children spend a great deal of time in child care settings. It is important to remember that these experiences are part of a child’s foundation. Encouraging physical activity is one way to help children build healthy habits for the future.

# GRAB AND GO LESSON

## Strategies for Incorporating Physical Activity in Child Care

Health and Safety

### References

- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2020). *Physical activity preschool 3 – 5 years*. [www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/growing-healthy/Pages/preschool-activity.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/growing-healthy/Pages/preschool-activity.aspx)
- American Heart Association. (2018, April 17). *How can I help my child be more physically active?*. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/aha-recs-for-physical-activity-in-children>
- Nemours. (2020). Healthy Kids Healthy Future. *Children's activities. Get kids moving*. <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/5-healthy-goals/get-kids-moving/classroom-activities/>
- PE Central. (2020, October 29). *PEC's lesson idea quick search*. <https://www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/pelesson-plans.html>
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2011, September). *Active early: A Wisconsin guide for improving childhood physical activity*. [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/active\\_early.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/active_early.pdf)

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer.

For more information and the nondiscrimination statement in other languages:  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/fns-nondiscrimination-statement>

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2021). *Grab and go lesson: Strategies for incorporating physical activity in child care*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The University cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images. Please contact [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org) for more information.