

Joy, play and doing together

Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood

Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2016:35



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Foreword

The living environment of Finnish children and families has changed considerably in the past few decades. This has led to changes in how families use their time and in their lifestyle, especially in the amount and quality of daily physical activity. Finland has been a pioneer of identifying how physical activity contributes to the child's physical, psychological, cognitive and social well-being. In 2005, it was one of the first countries to publish the national recommendations for physical activity for Finnish pre-school aged children, i.e. children under the age of eight. These recommendations were called Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education (Guides of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2005:17).

The Joy in Motion programme, aimed at increasing the level of physical activity in children's day especially by increasing child-focused operating methods, was launched in early childhood education and care (ECEC) last year. The child has the right to be and act in ways peculiar to children, which means that the child uses his or her whole body when playing, moving and exploring. Research results have shown that this kind of physical activity supports the child's holistic growth and development. Research results guide us adults by showing us what kind of physical activity and exercise we can use in our various roles to support children's well-being.

The Steering group for health-enhancing physical activity (TEHYLI) appointed in cooperation by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is a national body aimed at promoting citizens' health and well-being. Because the foundation of a physically active lifestyle that promotes health and well-being already forms in childhood, it is important that the support for a physically active lifestyle begins early enough, during early childhood education and care.

The scientific justification for the recommendations has been composed by a large multidisciplinary group of experts. The scientific justification has been published as a separate publication (Ministry of Education and Culture 2016: 22). The same group has also cooperated to summarise the practises for the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood. The key message in the recommendations is Joy, play and doing together. Daily physical activity is just as important for children's well-being as healthy nutrition and sufficient sleep and rest.

The work of the expert group was tied to a tight timetable, which means that the whole group has shown great dedication and commitment to promoting the well-being of Finnish children. We would like to express our thanks to this group of experts for their valuable work. We would particularly like to thank Docent Arja Sääkslahti, a researcher from the University of Jyväskylä, and Nina Korhonen, an expert from Valo ry and the secretary of the group.

Helsinki, 1 July 2016

Esko Ranto

Director General, chair of the Steering group for health-enhancing physical activity
Ministry of Education and Culture

Introduction

Children have an inborn need to be physically active. This means that children start to develop a physically active lifestyle very early in childhood. In these recommendations, the physical activity of children covers all kinds of physical activity of different levels of intensity in the child's life, such as playing, doing things indoors and outdoors, chores at home, outdoor activities, making trips to nature, and guided physical activity sessions.

When moving, children practice and reinforce their motor skills. This in turn improves their health, well-being and functional capacity. Physical activity and learning to master motor skills make children better equipped to attend school and learn new things.

Good motor skills bring joy and a sense of success. They increase children's quality of life and protect children from social exclusion. Relationships between children are instrumental in activating children. Children learn to create fun and meaningful activities together when they are engaged in physical activities with one another.

A physically active childhood enhances holistic health and well-being, promotes a positive course of life, and also predicts a physically active adulthood. Sufficient physical activity and a physically active lifestyle prevent, reduce or delay the development of risk factors for various diseases and the onset of the actual diseases.

Physical activity and a physically active childhood reduce the use of healthcare services and the costs from using those services. Physical activity therefore brings benefits to both individuals and society.

The recommendations for physical activity in early childhood are based on the principles of the

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which almost all articles concerning the contents of the rights also contain a dimension relating to physical activity. The most essential articles regarding the recommendations have been gathered together to remind us adults about our responsibility to support children's growth and development and help all children to grow towards fulfilling their possibilities. All children should be able to enjoy their rights without discrimination.

The recommendations for physical activity in early childhood are based on researched data on how adults working with children under the age of eight can advance the implementation of the rights of children by supporting children's holistic growth, development, health and well-being with the help of physical activity.

The recommendations for physical activity in early childhood provide instructions for the amount and quality of physical activity of children under the age of eight, the roles of the physical, psychological and social environments, and the planning and implementation of guided physical activity and physical education as part of early childhood education and care. The recommendations are intended for the children's parents, professionals of early childhood education and care, physical education and healthcare, and also for other communities that participate in the promotion of physical activity, health and well-being of children under the age of eight. In addition to the rights of the child set out in the UN's convention, the act on early childhood education and care (Varhaiskasvatuslaki 580/2015, in Finnish), the Basic Education Act (Perusopetuslaki 628/1998) and the Act on the Promotion of Sports

and Physical Activity (Liikuntalaki 390/2015) also emphasise the importance of play, physical activity and exercise for children. The studies used as a basis for drawing up the recommendations have been gathered into a separate scientific publication (Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22).

The work on the recommendations on physical activity in early childhood began when the need for updating the Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education 2005 (Guides of the

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2005:17) was identified during the Joy in Motion programme. The new, updated recommendations were prepared as a part of the work of the Steering group for health-enhancing physical activity (TEHYLI) appointed in cooperation by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The TEHYLI steering group commented on and approved the recommendation compiled by our expert group (Appendix 1).



Abstract



Figure 1. Children's physical activity is joy, playing and doing together

Recommendations for reaching the desired state

Activity is invigorating – at least three hours of physical activity every day

Children have the right to be physically active every day and need to do so on a daily basis. The recommended daily minimum of three hours of physical activity for children consists of activities of different levels of intensity: light activity and brisk outdoor activities, and also vigorous physical activity. Children must also be allowed to relax and unwind. Daily physical activity is just as important for the child as sufficient sleep and healthy nutrition.

Being active is inspiring – too much sitting is boring

It is natural for children to move, play and do things. Children are most active when playing with other children. Children learn by doing: by exploring, experimenting, trying and failing. This is why long periods of time spent standing still or sedentary are not natural ways for children to be. Sedentary periods lasting longer than one hour should be avoided and shorter inactive periods should also include short breaks that are suitable for children.

Towards an active lifestyle – the family is an important role model

Physical activity, outdoor activities and doing things together as a family are choices that teach children to integrate physical activity into their daily life. Encouragement and the example set by the adult, as well as clothes that make it easy to move, increase the physical activity of children.

When adults and children do things together, children learn interaction skills and develop a positive attitude towards others. By encouraging children to try things and experience shared joy of success they learn to form a positive self-image. These are important steps towards a physically active lifestyle that enhances health and well-being.

Listen - give the child an opportunity to have a say

Children are curious and active, and they usually use all their senses and imagination when familiarising with movement, experimenting and trying things, and exploring potential ways to move. Moving and playing together with others are natural ways for children to be and learn.

Children have opinions, wishes and a desire to participate in decisions and plans that concern them. Children's participation in play, physical activity and daily routines can be increased by listening to them and taking their opinions into consideration.

Learning skills by doing – the value of diversity

Children have the right to be physically active, experiment and challenge their physical limits. For children, physical activity is physically active play. It is sufficient when they can practice their basic motor skills every day. These skills develop in many ways when they can play with other children in different environments in all seasons of the year.

Learning should not be hampered by safeguarding children excessively. For this reason it is worth minimising the number of prohibitions. Children enjoy the skills they have acquired, so it is worth reserve time and space for children to practise their skills. If children have motor difficulties, they have the right to receive help and support.

The environment challenges and entertains – making dreams come true outdoors

To children, all the space and the environment around them is an interesting place for activity, whether indoors or outdoors. Adults are the ones who decide whether children are allowed to make use of the opportunities they have discovered to search, explore, try to invent different ways to move, control their bodies and express themselves.

Children find it fun to modify the environment for play that involves physical activity. Modifying the environment is particularly fun when children play together. Adults are responsible for finding and creating environments that encourage children to be

physically active and in which versatile ways of being physically activity are allowed. Children like natural environments, but they also find places for play in urban neighbourhoods.

Equipment and toys – inspire to experiment

Equipment and toys fascinate children. Different sports equipment, furniture, objects and recycled material encourage physical activity and give children more diverse opportunities to experience using their bodies, so it is a good idea to readily at hand objects that inspire children to engage in physically active play and games. Children in need of support should be offered equipment that enable them to move and make moving easier for them.

Guided physical activity – sense of success

Children want to succeed and learn new things. Structured physical activity sessions, for example in sports clubs, are an excellent way to acquire new skills with other children, under the encouraging guidance of safe adults. Children sense the atmosphere particularly from the feedback given to them.

Adults who guide the physical activity of children should take into account the opinions of children when planning the activities. This way all children can enjoy being physically active, be successful and learn new things independently and together with others. As individuals, all children are different, which should also show in the content of the activities. Children who have not engaged in physical activity before, children whose skills are weaker than those of the other children or children who need support in their physical activity must be able to engage in the activities. Gender, family, culture, language, health or other factors related to equality must not influence children's possibilities to participate.

Physical activity in early childhood education and care – every child's right

Under the act on early childhood education and care (Varhaiskasvatuslaki 580/2015), all children in early childhood education and care are entitled to planned, goal-oriented and versatile physical education. The

National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland obligate the staff in early childhood education and care to plan and implement early childhood education and care that supports the holistic growth and development of children. Staff in early childhood education and care must also plan activities in such a way that the importance of physical activity and exercise in the promotion of children's learning, health and well-being is realised.

The whole village encourages physical activity – everyone in cooperation

Interaction and cooperation between parents responsible for their children's education and staff in early childhood education and care is important. Cooperation with healthcare and social services, such as child health clinics, is also required to support children's holistic development. Local health and well-being representatives and bodies, communities and networks that organise physical activity, are important activators of children.

Since technical operators in the municipalities are responsible for planning yards and public areas in their area, their actions have a far-reaching impact on the availability of places and areas suitable for children's physical activity. Political decision-makers have the possibility and responsibility to make decisions to enhance children's health and well-being. The whole village needs to cooperate to create opportunities for children to be physically active and play!

Key words: children, physical activity, moving, exercise, well-being, recommendations, health, health promotion, early childhood education and care



Children's rights are adults' responsibilities

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child contains several provisions that remind us adults of the rights of children. These provisions are binding. The rights of children with disabilities are also safeguarded by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The following is a summary of those provisions in the rights of the child that highlight the importance of being physically active, moving, physical activity and play.

Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood are based on the below provisions and on scientific research data on how the realisation of the rights of the child can be promoted with the help of physical activity and exercise. The research data underlying the recommendations has been compiled into a separate uniform set of material. The 'Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood', which is collection of articles published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, is available online.



Table 1. Children's rights are adults' responsibilities

Some provisions in the convention on the rights of the child

The best interest of the child is the primary consideration

The best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration in all actions concerning the child.
(Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 7 and 14 of The Committee on the Rights of the Child)

Everyone is different and still equal

The rights of the child belong to all children. The child must not be discriminated against because of the appearance, origin, disability, views or other qualities of the child or the child's parents.
(Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 7, 9 and 11 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The child has his or her individual needs, opportunities and hopes – it is the responsibility of the adults to support the child's possibilities to grow and develop in peace and at his or her own pace, taking into consideration the child's health and well-being

The child has the right to life, survival and development – at his or her individual pace and to his or her full potential.
(Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The child has the right to be seen and heard – this right concerns both individual children and groups of children. children's views should be included e.g. when play and leisure opportunities, parks and play grounds are designed.

The child has the right to free expression of his or her opinions in all matters affecting the child, and the child's views must be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity.
(Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 7 and 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The child's parents are responsible for the upbringing of the child. They have a right to receive assistance in their child-rearing responsibilities, e.g. in ensuring a healthy early childhood

The child's parents are together responsible for the upbringing and care of the child. The state and local governments must support parents in this responsibility.
(Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

Play is an essential part of the child's life and development – play brings pleasure and enjoyment and the child's physical activity can also be increased through play. The child's right to rest and adequate sleep must also be ensured

The child has the right to rest, play and leisure, and artistic and cultural life.
(Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 7 and 17 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The child has the right to develop his or her skills, self-esteem and confidence in all his or her activities – adults must act in a child-centred way respecting the child

Education shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.
(Article 29 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 1 and 7 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The child has the right to enjoy the best possible standard of health – e.g. an unhealthy lifestyle affects the child's opportunities to self-realisation to his or her maximum potential

The child has the right to live his or her life as healthy as possible. The child has the right to receive treatment and help if he or she falls ill.
(Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 7 and 15 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The special needs of a child with disabilities must be given due weight, and barriers that impede realisation of their rights must be removed – e.g. the child's equal opportunities to participate in sports must be secured and the opportunities for sport planned in a way that enables the child's participation and inclusion.

A child with disabilities should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.
(Article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, General comments No. 7 and 9 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child)

Children with disabilities should enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms fully and on an equal basis with other children.
(Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

Children with disabilities should have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation, leisure and sporting activities.
(Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

1 Activity is invigorating – At least three hours of physical activity every day

“A physically active child is a healthy child”

Description of the present state

Children under the age of eight mainly spend their days performing tasks that are physically light. They are engaged in physical activity on average 1–2 hours a day. Of that time, they spend about one hour engaged in brisk activity. However, only 10–20% of Finnish preschool-aged children reach the level of daily physical activity that, according to the current recommendations, is required for normal growth, development, health and well-being. Children who need special support are engaged in physical activity on average less than other children because they do not have the same possibilities to participate as other children.

A little over 50% of children spend time in outdoor activities after their day in daycare. There are also children (about 10%) who do not get an opportunity to play outdoors in the evening. The differences in the amount of physical activity between weekdays and weekends among three-year-olds are only minor, but the older the children get, the more noticeable the differences become. Children’s activity declines during weekends. The differences between the genders also increase as children get older. Boys are on average more physically active than girls.

Children learn to use digital equipment at an early age. Children as young as three spend about an hour

watching television, computer, tablet and smartphone screens on weekdays, and more than 1 ½ hours during weekends. As children get older, they use digital technology even more.

Did you know?

Being physically active is a prerequisite for children’s normal growth and development. It supports children’s general abilities to learn by having a favourable effect on cognitive processes, such as alertness, attention, concentration, perception and memory. Being physically active improves children’s physical capacity and motor coordination, prevents obesity and the risk factors for type 2 diabetes and other cardiovascular diseases, strengthens the musculoskeletal system, reduces psychological strain, and improves mood. Being physically active also has a favourable effect on children’s social and psychological development and well-being because, when moving and playing, children practice their interaction skills and learn to get on with others.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

The child’s need and right to daily physical activity is reality for all children. The recommended minimum three hours of physical activity a day for children consist of activities of different ranges of intensity:

light physical activity, brisk outdoor activities and vigorous physical activity. In addition to the daily physical activity and sufficient rest and sleep, a healthy diet and being allowed to relax and unwind according to each child's individual needs are the pillars of children's holistic well-being.

**Remember: being active is inspiring
– Too much sitting is boring**

It is natural for children to keep changing their position while moving, playing and doing things. Children learn by doing; by exploring, experimenting, trying and failing. This means that staying inactive or sedentary for a long time, i.e. longer than one hour, are not natural ways for children to be. If staying inactive in one place is necessary, the activity should include suitable intervals and equipped with variety with the help of functional tasks.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By doing things together: moving, playing and making trips into nature with children. Do outdoor activities with your children, support their enthusiasm with appropriate clothing and equipment, praise the children without any emphasis on competition.
- By keeping in mind that it is also possible to be physically active indoors: do the usual chores at home with your children, and you get exercise quite naturally without even noticing it.
- By safeguarding children's holistic well-being: make sure they get enough playtime and other physical activity (at least three hours every day), rest and sleep according to their individual needs (on average 10–12 hours of sleep at night) and healthy nutrition.
- By monitoring and, when necessary, limiting children's physically passive activities such as watching television programmes. Break up long periods of inactivity with pauses. Use different digital equipment in ways that inspire physical activity.

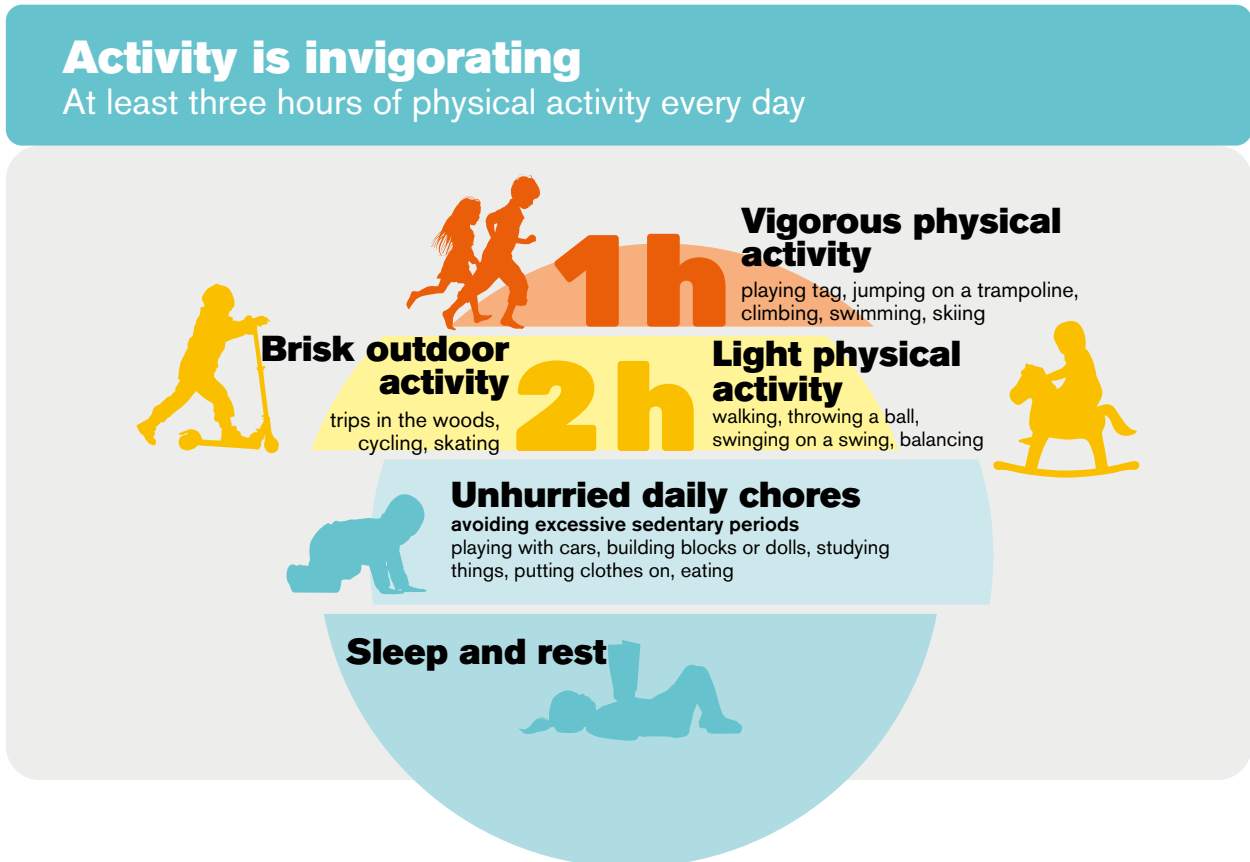


Figure 2. The recommended physical activity consists of daily chores of varying levels of intensity during the day.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Make sure that children do functional activities during their daily outdoor time. Avoid activities that require children to stay inactive for long periods. Guide children in physically active play and games that have rules – at least outdoors.
- Pay special attention to children whose level of physical activity is low and encourage them to take part in games that involve physical activity.

Clubs and other communities that organise physical activity and sports:

- Organise guided activity in a way that involves as little inactivity as possible, e.g. waiting for one's turn.



INCREASE	CHANGE	REDUCE
Games and other physical activity outdoors and in nature	The lift to the stairs	Excessive passive use of television, computers, tablets and other digital devices
Moving between places in a physically active manner, such as walking, riding a bike or using a scooter	Driving to riding a bike or walking, if possible	Staying inactive for long periods
Being physically active together	Public transport to riding a bike or walking	Unnecessary bans that restrict physical activity
Joy in physical activity, spurring and encouragement	Games that involve a lot of sedentary time to ones that involve more physical activity	Comparing children's performances
Learning new things through functional activities	Banning things to encouraging children	
Children's opportunities to play together		

Examples of physical activity, exercises and sports, different levels of intensity

Children's physical activity is **vigorous**, involving speed and a high level of intensity when they:

run fast, play games in which participants need to be chased, jump on the trampoline, push a large truck, climb up a hill, wrestle, swim, ski or walk up the stairs.

Children's physical activity is **moderate** and brisk when they:

walk briskly, use a scooter, ride a bike, skate, dance to fast and rhythmical music, play with a ball or use a large shovel.

Children's physical activity is **light** when they:

Walk slowly, play games involving a low level of physical activity, throw and catch a ball, swing

on a swing and maintain a balance, dance or move to slow and peaceful music, play role plays or perform children's normal daily chores such as putting clothes on, taking clothes off or organise their toys and things.

Children's physical activity is **very light**, almost physically passive when they:

sit in one place, draw, look at pictures and read, make sand cakes at the sandbox, watch television or use a computer, build structures using building blocks, solve a jig-saw puzzle, play with small objects or eat.

The level of intensity of children's physical activity is lowest when they are lying down and next lowest when they are sitting.

2 Towards an active lifestyle – The family is an important role model

“What adults do, children will do, too”

Description of the present state

On weekdays, families spend on average less than half an hour engaged in physical activity together. At weekends, they spend slightly more time in activities together. Fewer than one half of families with children engage in physical activity together 1–2 times a week. One fifth of all families engage in physical activity together every day.

Although support and encouragement from parents is important, the majority of parents encourage their children to physically active games or to physical activity only a few times a week. Parents can also be role models for their children as children of physically active parents are generally more active than other children.

Did you know?

Support from parents, such as an atmosphere that encourages physical activity, paying positive attention to the child’s activity by e.g. praising the child, and making sportswear and equipment available to the child, increases the child’s physical activity. Children are generally most active when they play with each other.

Parents are important role models in physical activity and other matters regarding lifestyle. Children whose parents are active in their daily lives and engage in physical activity and sports are more physically active and have better motor skills than other

children. When parents encourage their child and introduce the child to active games, the child’s overall physical activity increases. The differences between the level of activity among children already start to grow at the age of three, and stabilise to the level that is either lower or higher than that of other children. The pattern of a physically active lifestyle thus already starts to develop in early childhood.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

Children learn that physical activity is part of the daily routines according to the example they see at home. Engaging in physical activity, outdoors activities and doing things together with the family are choices which help children learn that physical activity is part of the daily life. Children’s possibilities to engage in physical activity are also supported by providing clothing that enables them to move.

When children engage in activities together with adults and other children, they learn to interact with, listen to and respect another person, and learn a positive attitude towards others. Joy over shared experiences and taking into consideration all family members are small but important moments of growth. Encouragement to try and joy over success help children form a positive self-image. These are essential steps towards a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By being physically active, playing and doing things together. Normal games that involve physical activity are just the right kind of activity.
- By creating shared, daily routines of physical activity for the family. Make regular trips to nature: have an adventure in the nearby woods, build a hut, go sliding or skating in winter, or find a nice place to have a picnic together.
- By encouraging the child to be physically active, praising the child when the child is physically active, by supporting the child's hobbies that involve physical activity and sports. Encourage the child to play together with other children.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Bring up the amount of the child's physical activity and the recommendations in discussions with the parents. Talk about the amounts of outdoor activities, other physical activity, and rest and nutrition in the child's daily life. Discuss the child's motor coordination, physical activity and exercise. Also talk about the social dimension of being physically active.

- Organise shared parents' evenings, theme days and weeks for the children and their parents.
- In your own activities, remember and pay attention to the fact that you as early childhood educators are role models for children also in matters relating to physical activity and exercise. Therefore, pay attention to how you talk about matters related to physical activity and sports. Do you encourage or restrict the children?

Clubs and other communities that organise physical activity and sports:

- Organise events in which adults can engage in physical activity together with their child. Remember that diverse physical activity is best for the child.
- Be aware of that people who have participated in the activities of the community as children often return to the same hobby as adults. Therefore, it is worthwhile to invest in positive experiences in hobbies.
- Keep the costs of hobbies at a reasonable level so that as many families as possible can let their children participate in the activities.



3 Listen – Give the child an opportunity to have a say

“Are you listening to me, really?”

Description of the present state

Children whose parents listen to them and act in a child-oriented way also experience moments of success in their physical activity. When parents provide opportunities for their children to be physically active, their children will enjoy physical activity. Children whose parents act in a child-oriented way feel competent and able, which results in increasing motivation for physical activity, whereas children whose parents are demanding and excessively control what their children do have more negative experiences regarding physical activity.

Did you know?

When you listen to the child, you make the child feel important. This experience reinforces the child's experience that he or she is competent. Inclusion results in the child's ability to take responsibility for himself or herself and others. The child will also learn interaction skills, empathy and the importance of agreeing on things together. Listening to and paying attention to the child are useful ways of upbringing and also a model for acting in a way that is respectful to others.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016: Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

The child is allowed to be curious and active. The child usually uses all senses when familiarising with and trying things, exploring and finding out about the opportunities to be physically active. Moving and playing are natural ways for the child to be and learn. The child is allowed to play together with other children. The child has opinions and suggestions that adults listen to and take into consideration, and that way increase the child's inclusion in matters concerning the child. Physical activity creates shared experiences of well-being.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By looking at the child's face and concluding what the child likes and enjoys from the expressions, gestures and what the child says. Do things together, listen to the child's suggestions and take them into consideration. Let the child join you in what you are doing and feel useful.
- By allowing the child to plan, decide and choose things and different small tasks to do in a way that is appropriate regarding the child's age and level of development.
- By involving the child in household chores and letting the child feel that he or she has an important role in the family's daily routines.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Pay attention to and listen to all children equally.
- Leave room for children's own thoughts. Decorate spaces and modify the environment together with children. Leave something for the children to do as they are more active when work on the environment has not been completed yet.
- Say thank you to children for their opinions and willingness to have a say actively.

Clubs and other communities that organise physical activity and sports:

- Appreciate the child. The child is the expert of his or her own life – listen to the child, look and take the child's opinions into consideration. Help the child to belong to the group. Let the child have a say in the content of the activities.
- Remember that interesting, varying tasks and the opportunity to learn new skills inspire to be physically active. Competing does not motivate all children.
- Create an atmosphere that encourages activity and makes everyone feel accepted and safe.



4 Learning skills by doing – the value of diversity

“You learn by doing”

Description of the present state

Children under the age of eight can normally run, gallop, jump on two feet, hop on one foot and leap before they start school. Running is the easiest movement skill, mastered well by one third of children aged three and about one half of children aged six.

Children have big individual differences in their balance skills, and girls are on average better at maintaining their balance than boys. Handling a ball is difficult for almost all children. Children need practice especially for throwing, catching, bouncing and kicking a ball and hitting it with a racket or bat. Boys are on average better at handling a ball than girls.

Children to whom fine motor skills and the above-mentioned gross motor skills at handling objects are very difficult have not developed the capacity to write by hand and the capacity for neat handwriting. It is therefore a good idea to practice ball handling skills. International research results indicate that the proportion of children with weak motor skills has increased in the past 30 years.

Did you know?

About 350,000 physical activity and exercise-related accidents occur in Finland every year, most of them among children and young people. The low level of

physical activity among children and the resulting weak motor skills are one reason for these accidents.

Children’s motor skills develop as children move and practise moving. Moving means being physically active and repeating their motor skills in a meaningful way. Good balance skills are a foundation for all other skills.

Children move from one place to another by crawling, moving on hands and knees, climbing, walking, running and jumping, and also with different hops and leaps. When the child’s moving skills are good, the child can cover longer distances. When the child’s ball handling skills are good, the child can throw, catch, hit and kick a ball. It is also easier to play together with other children, and the child is usually a popular playmate. Good motor skills therefore support the child’s physical, psychological and social well-being.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

Before the age of eight and starting school, the child can walk, run, jump, leap and climb. The child can also walk up and down the stairs and throw, catch, hit and kick a ball. Around the time the child starts school, he or she can ride a bike, ski and skate, and also move in shallow water. If the child has motor difficulties, the need for special support has been identified before the age of eight.

The child has the right to be physically active, experiment with and challenge his or her physical limits, and relax every day. For a child, physical activity is physically active play. It is sufficient and diverse when the child can practice basic motor skills with other children every day, in different environments and at all times of the year. The child is given the opportunity to learn to assess and control

risks related to physical activities instead of bans being imposed on doing things due to safeguarding the child from accidents. If the child has motor difficulties, for example, regarding cognitive function, the child is provided the support required. And, if a child has a difficult physical disability, help is provided to support the child's moving.

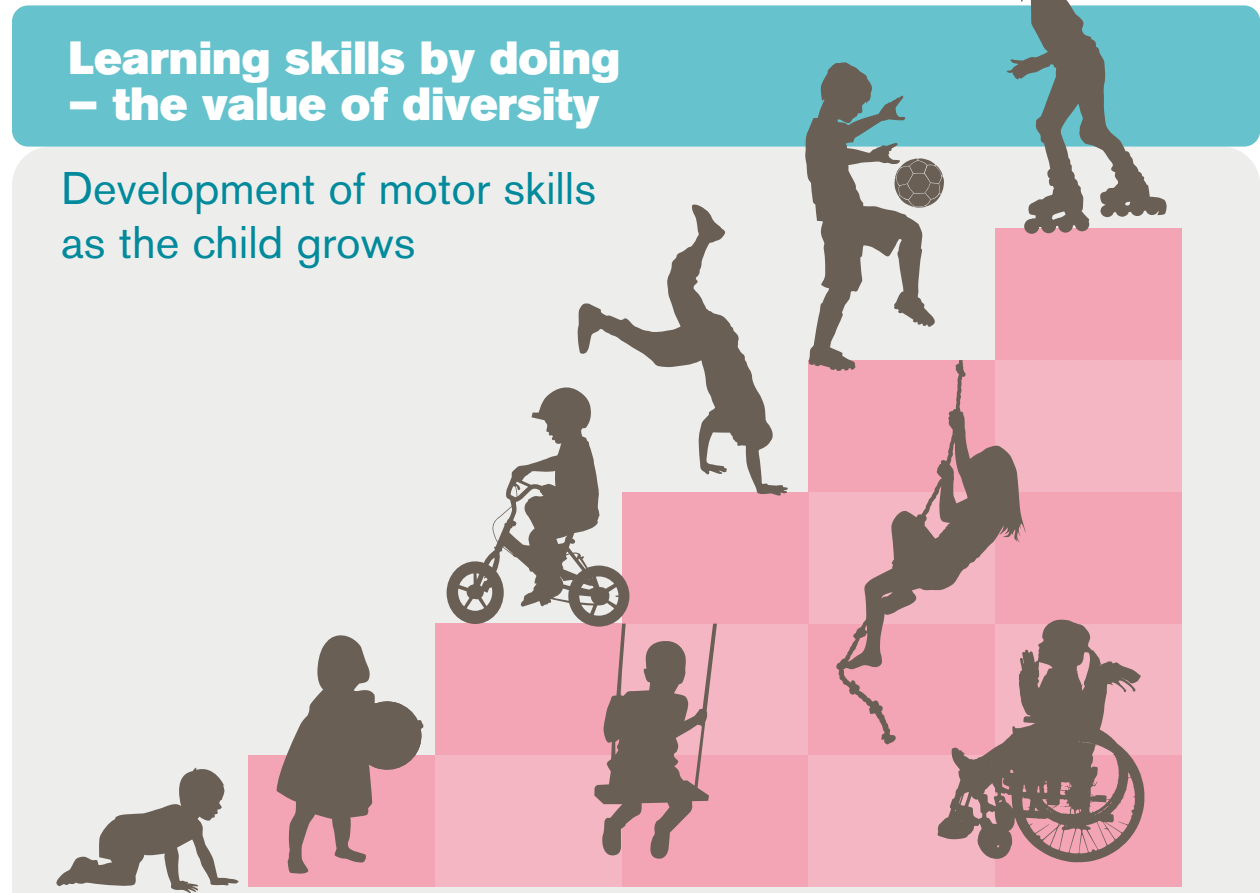


Figure 3. Motor skills develop through diverse play, physical activity and perseverance when practising the skills as the child grows.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By letting children experiment and challenge themselves, and test their skills at all times of the year. Walk, run, jump, throw and catch. Climb, cycle, ski and skate. Swim, play, dance and be silly – together with your child.
- By remembering that children learn by trying things: small bumps, scratches and bruises are not dangerous. They help children to recognise their own skills and endure small misfortunes.
- If you notice that your child has difficulties in learning new skills, bring the matter up at the child health clinic and with the staff in early childhood education and care.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Encourage children to learn, inspire them to wonder about things and provide support when necessary. Teach new skills and games supportive of the age group and level of development both indoors and outdoors, at all times of the year. Celebrate

successful moments together with the child. Pay attention to your choice of words: make sure they inspire children to be physically active and support learning.

- Create situations in which children can inspire each other and learn from each other.
- If you notice that it is difficult for a child to learn motor skills, bring the matter up with the child's parents.

Clubs and other communities that organise physical activity and sports:

- Remember that a child is not a small adult. A child-oriented approach in the planning of activities means that the child's development stages are respected and the child is allowed to be an active participant. The child's development can be supported by proceeding step by step, increasing the level of challenge:

- 1) command of basic motor skills
- 2) application of skills in different environments
- 3) familiarisation with different equipment and modifying them for different situations
- 4) learning basic sports skills
- 5) practising basic sports techniques



5 The environment challenges and entertains – making dreams come true outdoors

“Grab the opportunity”

The present state

The majority of children currently live in towns and cities or suburbs. In urban environments, children risk losing the connection with nature if they spend most of their day indoors. On the other hand, the most recent research results have shown that children who live in cities and towns engage themselves in physical activity and sports more than other children. Towns and cities have more opportunities for children to pursue diverse hobbies than sparsely populated areas. On average, children under the age of eight spend most of their day indoors and, depending on where they live, may spend even more than one hour sitting in different forms of transport. The majority of children say that wooded areas are their favourite places for play.

Did you know?

According to the General comment No. 17 on the rights of the child, children have the right to a safe and appropriate playing and operating environment. The environment should also encourage children to play. Excessive safeguarding from accidents must not prevent children from playing and testing their physical limits. Children should be familiarised with nature and outdoor activities. Children very rarely choose sitting in the car or in other means of transport

if they are also offered other options.

To children, spaces both indoors and outdoors are interesting and encourage to be physically active. However, it is the adults that decide whether children are given the opportunity to look for, experiment with and take advantage of the opportunities to look for, experiment with and invent different ways of movement, body control and self-expression. Children find it fun to modify the environment for play that involves physical activity. They especially enjoy natural environments.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

Adults create environments that encourage physical activity and remove barriers to physical activity. Adults understand that all spaces can be places for physical activity for children and let children look for, try and invent different ways to move. Children are allowed to modify the environment together with other children. They are provided the opportunity to learn to evaluate and control risks related to being active without unnecessary bans intended to safeguard them from accidents. Children are allowed to enjoy the skills they have learned by offering them e.g. an opportunity to work with their hands and walk independently – children find doing and making things themselves great! Adults reserve time for children to do and make things themselves, at their own pace.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By letting the child invent ways to use the space for moving. Allow the child to challenge his or her skills and limits, also indoors.
- Outdoor activities belong to every child's daily life. Familiarise the child with woods, rocks, fields, natural waters and parks. Make trips to urban nature and nature trails, and keep an eye on the changing seasons.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Make sure equality is realised and all children have a chance to try different ways to move. Let children stay curious and enthusiastic. When you keep an eye on the changing seasons, be inspired by your activity with the child and see the beauty of the environment through the eyes of the child – as a big opportunity.
- Provide children with sensations and experiences for all senses.
- Find out about the possibilities for outdoors activities in the locality and also tell the parents about them.

- Take advantage of the opportunities offered by nature and also use the built environment in the neighbourhood as a place for learning.
- Help children that need special support in physical activity receive the support they need to be able to participate in the activities.

Clubs and other communities that organise physical activity and sports:

- Make sure the exercise children get is diverse.
- Keep changing the places and surfaces for exercise, take advantage of indoor and outdoor spaces.

Community planners:

- Pay attention to the promotion of physical activity and to safety perspectives in municipal transport and community planning.
- Ensure that there are playgrounds and sports facilities in the neighbourhood and diverse low-threshold possibilities for children of different ages to engage in physical activity.
- Make sure that the different sports and recreational facilities are fully accessible.



6 Equipment and toys – inspire to experiment

“Hear the call of ball games”

The present state

Children are not dependent on equipment in their moving, but equipment has been shown to have an effect on the level of children’s physical activity. At best, different equipment and toys may inspire to move in diverse ways. Children’s different backgrounds, such as the parents’ socio-economic background, may have an effect on what kind of toys and tools are available to the child: not everyone can afford to purchase equipment that encourages physical activity.

Perhaps slightly surprisingly, research has shown that children in families with a lower income have access to more home entertainment electronics than other children. It is important for adults to be aware of the risk that electronics may tempt the child to stay indoors and immerse himself or herself in physically passive activity such as playing on the computer or game console or watching television for long periods of time. However, digital technology may also inspire the child to be physically active.

Did you know?

The right to non-discrimination (Article 2 of the rights of the child) is a central principle in the rights of the child. All children must have equal opportunities to participate in play, recreation, sports and leisure-time activities.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

Equipment and toys fascinate children. Adults provide children with different sports equipment, furniture, objects and recycled material to encourage them to be physically active, to enhance experiencing things through their bodies and to offer more diverse experiences. Technology is also taken advantage of to make it easier to start moving. Adults make equipment and facilities that inspire active play and games freely available and accessible to children. Aids are also available and accessible to those who need support when necessary.

7 Guided physical activity – sense of success

‘Come along’

The present state

Finland has a wealth of different associations, organisations, sports clubs and other communities that provide organised physical activity for preschool-aged children. The goals of the organisers may vary greatly depending on the basic values governing the operation, the children’s age and the experience of the instructors. Activities targeted at children under the age of 3 are mainly so called parent-child activities or physical activity for families.

Over one half of children aged 3–6 participate in some kind of organised physical activity. Participation in guided activities does not, however, automatically mean that the child’s daily need for physical activity is met; the child also needs spontaneous activity. In early childhood education and care, children have on average one guided physical activity session per week. About half of this time is spent listening to the instructions and waiting for one’s turn.

Did you know?

Children are curious and want to learn new things. Moments of insight shared with others make children eager to learn more. Shared physical activity sessions that are guided by a safe, inspiring adult are an excellent way to offer children an opportunity to learn new skills.

The safe atmosphere of the physical activity sessions arises from the atmosphere created by the adults guiding the activity. Physical safety arises from the possibility for the child to practice skills without a serious risk of physical injury. Socio-emotional safety arises from accepting the child as he or she is and welcoming the child to join the games and do things together with the others. Psychological safety arises from a positive and encouraging attitude towards the child. All this is conveyed to the child especially through the feedback given to the child.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

The desired state

Adults who guide the physical activity of children listen to the children when they plan the activities. This way everyone has a chance to enjoy being physically active, experience moments of success and learn new things both on their own and together with others. Because children are individuals and therefore different, the content of the activities is built so that children who have not engaged in physical activity before and have weaker skills than other children can also join the activities. Children’s family, cultural or linguistic background does not affect the possibilities to participate and organised physical activity offers everyone equal opportunities to shared experiences.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By giving children opportunities to participate in organised physical activity.
- By remembering that each child is an individual and develops at an individual pace.
- By supporting a positive atmosphere, encouraging one's own and other people's children. Let the instructor work in peace and respect the operating principles that the group has agreed on together.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Organise regular diverse guided physical activity sessions for children throughout the year. Organise the activity in such a way that children can move as much as possible and that they need to wait for their turn as little as possible.
- Take advantage of peer learning by, for example, combining pre-school education and guided physical activity.

- Teach children games that have rules and help them to get started with those games. Join the children and also tempt your colleagues to join in.

Clubs and other communities that organise physical activity and sports:

- Compile a list of the possibilities to engage in physical activity in your municipality or the nearby area and promote them actively.
- Work in cooperation with, for example, healthcare services and also guide the children's parents to engage in physical activity. Encourage families to adopt a lifestyle that enhances health and well-being.
- When planning activities, take into account that the younger the children are, the more skilled the adults guiding them must be, and that there must be enough adults present.
- Encourage the instructors to participate in training for instructors of children's physical activity.
- The activities for children under the age of eight must take place between 8.00 and 20.00 to allow children to calm down before going to bed.



8 Physical activity in early childhood education and care – every child’s right

‘Physical activity is fun’

Description of the present state

According to research, most of the time children spend in early childhood education and care involves very light physical activity. Only under one hour of their daily activities consists of vigorous physical activity. Almost 70% of intensive physical activity of children is related to activities with other children. Children’s outdoor play in early childhood education and care involves more physical activity than play indoors, although almost half of even all outdoor play involves only light physical activity. Children are most physically active during guided play that involves physical activity and has rules, and during free spontaneous play. Among children aged 3–4, free spontaneous play accounts for about 20% of the time, and they play more freely outdoors than indoors. Among older children, spontaneous play takes place indoors more than outdoors.

The intensity of physical activity is low during group sessions led by the teacher. We can therefore conclude that adults tend to direct children to operating practices that involve a lot of inactivity, even though a lot of physical activity enhances children’s learning. Physical activity is invigorating, sensitises children’s senses to what they are learning, improves concentration and also increases children’s commitment. Physical activity is therefore a good way to facilitate children’s learning.

In early childhood education, mainly in day care centres, children have on average one guided physical activity session per week. Fortunately, it is easy to increase the number of these sessions. Based on observation studies, early childhood educators encourage children verbally to be physically active only very seldom: there is no encouragement to be physically active during more than 90% of the time in day care. Because physical activity of children is highest in guided play with rules, it is a good idea to increase the amount of that type of play.

(Source: Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016:22)

Did you know?

About the legislation and documents governing early childhood education:

- Every child is entitled to planned, goal-oriented and diverse physical education as part of early childhood education and care (Act on early childhood education and care 580/2015, in Finnish) and basic education (Basic Education Act 628/1998).
- Early childhood education and care, of which pre-school education is a part, and basic education form a systematically progressing system for the child’s growth and learning, and a foundation for lifelong learning (National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2014, 12).
- Section 2a of the act on early childhood education and care (580/2015) lays down the objectives of pre-primary education and the qualities of a good environment for early childhood education and care (Act on early childhood education and care 580/2015, Section 6)

- National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland is a document that obligates early childhood educators to plan and implement early childhood education and care in a manner that supports the child's holistic growth and development. The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (VASU) are the foundation for the preparation of local curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care. Additionally, a statutory early childhood education and care plan is drawn up for each child (VASU 2016).
- The local guidelines are evaluated on a regular basis.
- Staff in early childhood education and care should plan the activities so that the importance of moving and physical activity in enhancing the child's learning and well-being is realised (National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2014/VASU 2016)

The desired state

The right of each child to daily playtime and other physical activity is realised in early childhood education and care. Early childhood education staff plans the child's early childhood education and activities so that the child will also be able to meet the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education and care. Children spend time outdoors every day and early childhood education staff encourages them to physically active play by creating versatile and inspiring play and learning environments. Children are offered guided opportunities to practice different kinds of physical activity using different kinds of equipment. The child's right to planned physical education is realised. The atmosphere is accepting and inspires to move. The child is allowed to use diverse equipment that inspires moving during spontaneous play.

Concrete measures

The diversity of activities and learning environments and a child-oriented approach must be ensured by careful planning so that early childhood education and care and the included guided physical activity i.e. guidance for the physical activity of children support the holistic growth and development of the child. The kindergarten teacher is responsible for planning the activities. The child's spontaneous physical activity

also requires joint planning by work communities and rules on what is allowed and what is not.

The starting point is the child's early childhood education and care as a whole:

- In how much physical activity are children involved in during the day?
- How long do children stay outdoors and how active are they during that time? Are there activities, games with rules, etc.?
- How is the child guaranteed the possibility to concentrate enough, learn new things and relax?
- How can functionality, the child's own activity and participation be increased in sessions lead by the teacher?
- How can the child be encouraged to move even more? How can unnecessary bans be turned into encouraging advice?

Guided physical activity in early childhood education and care

Guided physical activity is realised with both the group of children (weekly) and individual children (daily). Guided physical activity is planned according to the interests and needs of the particular group of children. A large amount of physical activity during guided physical activity has an absolute value. Nevertheless, guided physical activity must also include child-oriented, diverse and goal-oriented activities that have been planned in advance.

At the beginning of each period of operation, early childhood education staff divides the planning of guided physical activity into at least two stages: an annual plan and session plans. The starting point for this planning is a general review at the beginning of the period of operation, in which the staff together plan what kind of rules and advance planning can be used to increase children's spontaneous moving and the amount of physical activity.

Physical activity in early childhood education and care

Every child's right

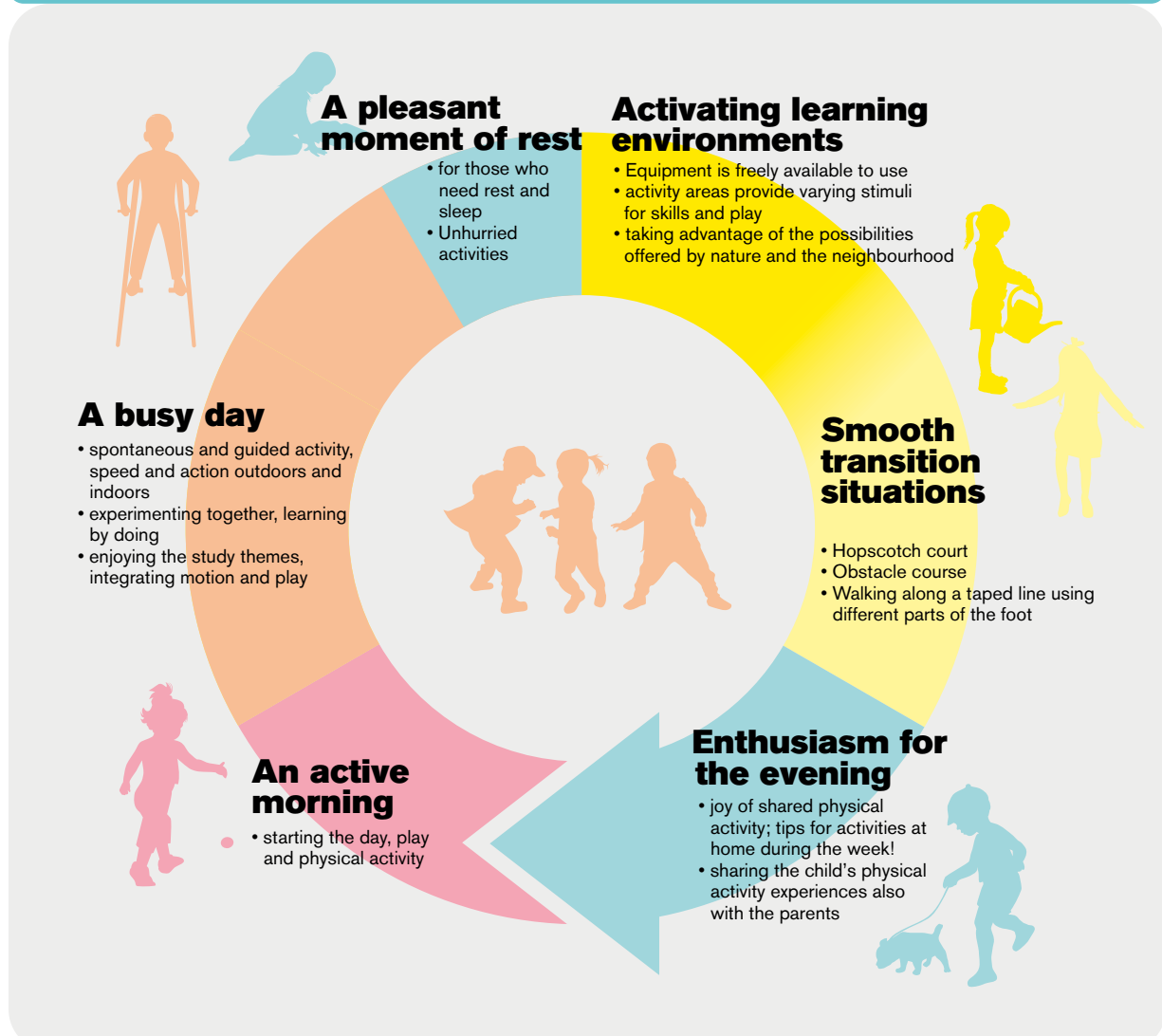


Figure 5. Physical activity is a natural part of the child's day in early childhood education and care.

The work community must agree on and confirm the following matters in the annual plan:

- Investigating the cooperation possibilities e.g. with local organisers of sports and physical activity
- Taking advantage of the seasons
- Taking advantage of different operating environments in diverse ways
- Paying attention to functionality in connection with different celebrations and culturally important events (performances, songs and play in which children use their whole body)
- Observing and assessing the child's sensorimotor and motor skills in addition to assessing other areas
- Ensuring that sensorimotor skills and basic motor skills are learned
- Planning diverse use of the equipment
- Planning opportunities for spontaneous physical activity
- Planning and implementing the amount and content of spontaneous and guided physical activity in such a way that spontaneous physical activity can be increased by providing diverse opportunities and attractive contents

A session plan is needed for each guided session:

- The objectives, derived from annual and periodic plans, are decided on
- Facilities and equipment are booked
- A decision on which skills and contents will be practised is made
- The need for differentiation on the basis of skills or e.g. motor learning difficulties is discussed
- The teaching methods to be used are planned
- The organisation of the session is discussed and planned so that each child gets to do as much physical activity as possible
- Means to guarantee a positive operating atmosphere for the session are discussed in advance (e.g. what feedback is given to the child and how)
- The ways to include children who do little physical activity are discussed
- The realisation of the session plan is assessed and the necessary changes are made

With minor adjustments, a well-made plan can be used a few times in a row.

The objectives of physical education in early childhood education and care are bringing up to be physically active and bringing up with the help of physical activity.

Bringing up to be physically active

The development of a physically active lifestyle in early childhood is very important: research shows that the lifestyle adopted as early as at the age of three tends to remain. Daily physical activity is a prerequisite for the child's normal physical and holistic development. Participation in guided physical activity has been shown to predict a physically active lifestyle both in youth and in adulthood.

Bringing up with help of physical activity

Physical education in early childhood education and care must be child-oriented, diverse, goal-oriented and regular to support the child's physical, cognitive, psychological, emotional and social development. Physical education is a natural part of the child's entire day. This means that the child is encouraged to increased physical activity by the adult, and that the adult makes solutions and actively takes action to create learning environments that encourage physical activity. It also means that the child's self-image is broadened and supported: the child is encouraged to test his or her physical limits, identifies emotions and learns to regulate expressing emotions.

Group situations provide an excellent opportunity to practice interaction skills. Hence, physical education is activities through which the adult supports the child's well-being throughout the day.

Guiding children

The adult must guide the activities in such a manner that there is room for the child to make observations, explore and experiment. The adult should also reserve time for observing the children. The adult must create a safe atmosphere and choose the teaching methods in such a manner that each child has an opportunity to be active and gain successful experiences. In order to benefit from the child's spontaneity and participation in learning, the most important task for the adult is to plan and implement a learning environment in which the child can make discoveries and gain new insights. Encouraging working methods and tasks that increase interactions between children support learning.



Although a versatile learning environment is efficient in terms of learning, a child who has difficulties in learning motor skills needs clear guidance for the skill practised. It is often difficult for a child like this to find the information needed for completing the task from the environment. Therefore, a concrete example and feedback from the adult may help, for example, in learning a new motor skill.

Under the act on early childhood education and care, staff in early childhood education and care have an obligation to observe the activities of the child during day care (2nd act on early childhood education and care 580/2015, Section 7a). According to this obligation, the kindergarten teacher must draw up a personal early childhood education and care plan for each child with the child's guardians. The goals for reaching the objectives in the child's early childhood education and care and the measures for reaching these goals are recorded in the plan in a way that supports the child's development, learning and well-being. With the help of systematic observation, early childhood education staff receives important information about the quality and amount of physical activity of children and development of their motor and sensorimotor skills. This information should be made use of when the structure of the child's entire day in day care is planned and still in more detail when the content of physical education is planned and implemented.

One or two in twenty children experience motor learning difficulties. Research has shown that the majority of motor learning difficulties can already be detected at the age of 3–6. It is slow and laborious for these children to learn new motor skills. The challenges may be seen, for example, as a difficulty to anticipate activities or analyse what is required in a task or environment. Movements will not become automatic and the child may not be able to repeat the learned skill in a new situation. Other learning difficulties and attention deficiencies are very commonly linked to motor learning difficulties. Careful observation is therefore important to assess the need for early support.

- Make sure that children can go outdoors for at least two hours every day.
- Give them room and time to engage in games that involve physical activity.
- Modify the children's operating environment together with the children to make it favourable for successful activities.
- When outdoors, encourage children to participate in physically active play that has rules.
- Encourage, inspire and praise. Also give positive feedback for trying.
- Make sure that each child can participate in a organised physical activity session every day.
- Give the child functional tasks to do every day. Make sure the child learns to use motion and the whole body also as a means for other learning.
- Take advantage of impressions to support learning.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Parents and guardians of children:

- By showing interest in the physical activity the child has engaged in during the day in day care; talk to the child and the child's educator.
- By providing comfortable clothing for the child to move, play and go on trips to nature. Support the work by early childhood education staff by providing flexible light clothes for indoor activities and clothes appropriate to the weather for outdoor activities. When clothes enable moving, the child understands the importance of the activity.

Administration and management of early childhood education and care:

- Make sure that all early childhood education and care units have an appropriate indoor facility for physical activity, the yard in the day care centre is large enough, every day care centre has the basic equipment required for physical activity, and some money in the budget has been allocated to the maintenance of the equipment. If there is no indoor facility, instruct staff to use the indoor and outdoor facilities in the neighbourhood.

- Make sure that the right of early childhood education and care staff to receive regular continuing education annually is realised also in terms of the contents of physical activity and sports.

Head of day care centre:

- Make sure that your units have an appropriate indoor facility for physical activity, there is equipment that inspires physical activities in the day care yard for children to use even during spontaneous play, your unit has the required basic equipment for physical activity, and that money is allocated to renewing it every year.
- Encourage staff to participate in continuing education regarding physical education. Also take care of the other early childhood educators in your area, such as family day care providers.
- Work in cooperation and network with e.g. the municipal sports and park services and the parish.

Staff in early childhood education and care:

- Be aware of the obligatory nature of the national and local core curricula on early childhood education and care and the child-specific early childhood education and care and pre-primary education plans. Bring up the child's physical activity in VASU discussions and

encourage parents to make sure that the child gets the recommended minimum level of physical activity every day (3 hours per day).

- Discuss the child's motor development and give feedback on the child's physical activity also to the parents.
- If you notice that, despite the practise, the child cannot learn new skills or cannot use the learned skill when the environment or circumstances change, bring the subject up with the parents. Pay attention to children who are withdrawn in the company of other children. There may be motor difficulties behind the child being withdrawn.
- If you suspect that the child may have motor learning difficulties, use different observation forms to support your assessment.

Sports clubs and other local communities organising physical activity:

- Find out about the early childhood education and care units in the area. Offer help with guidance, lend equipment, develop cooperation. This way you will gain new participants.
- Avoid too much competition and comparing children's results.
- Work in cooperation with the other sports clubs and operators.



9 The whole village encourages physical activity – Everyone in cooperation

‘The world welcomes the sounds of children playing’

Description of the present state



Figure 6. Are all the bans always necessary?



Figure 7. The whole village encourages physical activity (Adapted from a manifest on physical activity of children and young people, '10 teesiä ja 100 lupausta. Manifesti lasten ja nuorten liikumisesta.'

Did you know?

The provision of sports services is one of the statutory duties of the municipality. The local authority is responsible for providing the opportunities and facilities for physical activity:

1. by providing physical exercise services and organising physical activities that promote general health and well-being with due regard to the various target groups.
2. by supporting civic action, including the club activities
3. by constructing and maintaining facilities for physical activity (Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity 390/2015)

The local authority is required to consult the residents in decisions on key issues related to sports and physical activity (Local Government Act 365/1995).

The local authority is required to promote and monitor the residents' health and welfare and evaluate e.g. the level of their physical activity (Health Care Acts 1326/2010).

Physical activity is a basic municipal service whose purpose is to promote the wellbeing and health, physical activity and exercise of local residents (Recommendations for the Promotion of Physical Activity in Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2013).

When organising early childhood education and care the local authority must work in cooperation with bodies responsible e.g. for education, sports and

physical activity, culture and the operation of child health clinics, and other necessary bodies (Act on early childhood education and care 580/2015).

The desired state

The living environment of a physically active child extends outside the familiar area of the garden or yard. Everyone can therefore set an example and encourage the child to be physically active. Interactions and cooperation between guardians responsible for the bringing up of their children and early childhood educators is important in terms of reaching the sufficient level of daily physical activity for the child and supporting the child's holistic development. Supporting the holistic development requires cooperation also with child health clinics and other healthcare professionals.

Local bodies, communities and networks that provide well-being and physical activity play an important role in activating children. Technical operators in municipalities are in charge of the planning of yards, regions and transport, which has far-reaching effects on how many and what kind of facilities for physical activity are available to children. Political decision-makers can make decisions that promote children's health and well-being. The whole village is needed in creating opportunities for children to be physically active and play!

In addition to parents, staff in early childhood education and actors organising physical activity, also children's grandparents and neighbours, healthcare professionals, and municipal decision-makers and officials can with their actions promote a physically

active childhood. As meaningful activity helps children grow into members of the community, let children be active and busy. The child that you helped to swing on a swing faster or whose ball you returned to the game with a friendly smile may later open the door for you in the local shop or give you a seat in a crowded bus.

How can the objectives be achieved?

Grandparents and other people close to the child:

- By teaching your child physically active games that you can remember from your childhood. Think and try to recall what you did when you were children yourselves. Today's children also need excitement and adventures!
- By supporting the parents in bringing up their children. Remind them about the importance of outdoor activities. Go berry picking or skiing together with the children. Teach the children to move in nature and respect their living environment.
- By giving useful sports items such as skates, helmets, rackets or swimming goggles as presents.
- By offering help to the child's parents with transport to hobbies, e.g. by offering to walk the child the training.

Neighbours, godparents and friends:

- By remembering that playing is an integral part of childhood. Ask to be allowed to join in. Also take the child from next door with you when you go on a bike trip or to the swimming pool. Take advantage of shared transport.
- By keeping the garden or yard where you live pleasant and inviting for diverse outdoor play. Bushes are hiding places for the child, curbs in the street trapezes, puddles safe oceans, and metal rails for beating rugs on are lianas. It is not necessary to ban children from playing in these places as there is extremely rarely any real danger involved. Make sure that children also have an opportunity to invent play and games with each other.
- By keeping the bike shed clean and tidy. Keep the swings and other shared equipment in good condition. Agree on the use of shared toys and sports equipment in the housing company. Toys and equipment need their own storage spaces.
- By giving children their own, important tasks to do in communal garden clear-ups.
- By organising activities such as sports sessions for residents' associations in sports facilities. Organise a physical activity event in the neighbourhood. You will create community spirit in your neighbourhood at the same time.



Healthcare professionals:

- Support the child's parents in acting as role models in physical activity. Guide families with children towards daily physical activity and towards a balance between activity, rest and nutrition. Give positive feedback to parents in their efforts to increase their child's physical activity to meet the recommendations.
- Take advantage of the available methods and material developed for lifestyle assessment and guidance and bringing up lifestyle issues in discussion. Pay attention to the child's motor development and, if necessary, direct the child to further examinations or encourage him or her to pursue physically active hobbies. Enquire about the possibilities of the local authority to support children's physical activity by, for example, offering various free tickets.
- Encourage the whole family to be physically active at all times of the year. Encourage parents to play ball games, swim, slide slopes in winter, ski and skate together with their child.
- Also ask the child's opinion. Monitor the interaction between the child and the parents: do the parents pay attention to their child and allow room for the child and the child's opinions?
- Create a functioning cooperation network with the child's guardians and the early childhood education and care unit for children in need of special support. A cooperation network is needed in guiding all children to physical activities.
- The local authority is also responsible for offering aids for physical activity to those who need special support. Also tell the child's parents about these possibilities.

Municipal decision-makers:

- Ensure that the acts on early childhood education and care, basic education, promotion of sports and physical activity, and healthcare are implemented.
- Save money by investing in park areas and playgrounds, yards and sports facilities at day care centres, and safe routes for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Prevention of chronic and lifestyle diseases saves the local authority huge amounts of money! Euros used to increase physical activity bring significant savings in the long term. For example, preventing one young person from becoming socially excluded is estimated to save about €10,000.
- Include children when you plan playgrounds, yards of day care centres and green areas. Investments in the living conditions of children and their parents is worthwhile. Good services in early childhood education are one of the most important conditions, for example, for businesses in the municipality.

- Free access to playgrounds and balance and exercise equipment in parks, sports fields and beaches is part of modern urban planning. A pleasant environment attracts more residents and tax payers to the municipality. Parks, hiking and recreation areas, beaches, woodlands, beauty spots and versatile opportunities for physical activity increase the pleasantness of the environment at all times of the year.
- Ensure that the equality and parity of the sexes is realised in your municipality. Local authorities that invest in the well-being of their residents have a facility for lending sports equipment and aids.
- Ensure that your local authority implements the non-discrimination principle according to Article 2 of the rights of the child: physical obstacles in parks and playgrounds have been removed, people with disabilities can access sports facilities, etc. Make sure that, in addition to physical accessibility, matters relating to seeing, hearing and communication have also been paid attention to. Sports facilities are accessible when they are functional, safe and pleasant for everyone to use.
- Also remember ethnic minorities and immigrants. Clear images and pictures are helpful for them. Images and pictures are also helpful for children who cannot read, autistic people and people with disabilities. Contrasts and clear colours in sports facilities help people with visual disabilities engage in physical activity independently.
- Make sure that all early childhood education and care units have an appropriate indoor facility for physical activities, the yard at the day care centre is large enough, every day care centre has the basic equipment required for physical activity and that sufficient funds are allocated to renewing the equipment in the budget every year.
- Make sure that regular yearly continuing education in physical education is available for the municipality's early childhood education staff, who is entitled to it.



Appendix 1.

The following experts have participated in the preparation of the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood:

Aalto-Nevalainen Päivi, Counsellor for Cultural Affairs, PhD, MSc (Sport and Health Sciences), Ministry of Education and Culture
Ahonen Timo, Professor, MA (Psychology), University of Jyväskylä
Asunta Piritta, MSc (Sport and Health Sciences), University of Jyväskylä
Haapala Eero, PhD (Physiology), University of Eastern Finland, University of Jyväskylä
Holappa Arja-Sisko, Counsellor of Education, PhD (Education), Finnish National Board of Education
Karvinen Jukka, Senior Expert, Valo
Korhonen Nina, Expert, Valo; Joy in Motion programme (secretary of the working group)
Kurttila Tuomas, Ombudsman for Children, Office of the Ombudsman for Children
Kyhälä Anna-Liisa, MSc (Education), Lecturer, University of Helsinki
Lakka Timo, Professor, Doctor of Medical Science, Specialist in Internal Medicine, University of Eastern Finland
Laukkanen Arto, PhD (Sport and Health Sciences), University of Jyväskylä
Miettinen Mari, Senior Officer, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
Muuronen Kaisu, Senior Advisor, Central Union for Child Welfare
Mäki Päivi, Master of Health Sciences, Development Manager, National Institute for Health and Welfare
Määttä Suvi, Master of Social Sciences, Samfundet Folkhälsan
Paavolainen Leena, PhD (Sport and Health Sciences), Deputy Director of the High Performance Unit, Finnish Olympic Committee
Pietilä Matti, Counsellor of Education, Finnish National Board of Education
Pulakka Anna, PhD (Health Sciences), University of Turku
Pulli Elina, MA (Education), Specialist in Early Childhood Education, City of Espoo
Pönkkö Anneli, PhD (Sport and Health Sciences), University of Oulu; Joy in Motion network
Rautio Sari, Chair, Perheliikuntaverkosto
Reunamo Jyrki, PhD (Education), Docent, Lecturer, University of Helsinki
Roos Eva, Doctor of Food Sciences, Docent, Senior Researcher, Samfundet Folkhälsan
Soini Anne, MSc (Sport and Health Sciences), Doctor of Health Sciences, University Teacher, University of Jyväskylä
Sääkslahti Arja, PhD (Sport and Health Sciences), Docent, University Researcher, University of Jyväskylä (chair of the working group)
Tarkka Kirsi, Special Adviser, Finnish National Board of Education
Viholainen Helena, PhD (Education), Docent, University Lecturer, University of Jyväskylä

In addition, the Recommendations for Physical Activity in Early Childhood have been commented on by the TEHYLI working group, the Joy in Motion network organised by Valo, the Finnish Board of Education, and the LIKES research centre. In addition, a total of 71 private people, communities, associations and networks commented on the recommendations through an open electronic system in May 2016.

Appendix 2.

Basic equipment recommended for physical education in early childhood for children under the age of 3.

Indoors:

- balls of different sizes and made of different materials (large ones about 25cm in diameter, small ones about 5cm in diameter)
- beanbags
- pieces of different forms and colours
- music suitable for physical activity
- rhythmical instruments
- mopeds and cars with a seat on top
- toys to pull and push
- a trampoline (e.g. 1–2 metres in diameter)
- mattresses
- gymnastic benches
- tyres
- play parachutes (about 4 metres in diameter)
- bats and rackets

Outdoors:

- equipment that can be pulled or pushed in summer and winter, e.g. big lorries that can be pushed
- equipment that children can sit on, cars and mopeds
- balls of different sizes, made of various materials



Recommended sports equipment for children aged 3–6.

Indoors:

- all equipment mentioned in the list for children aged 0–3
- hoops
- skipping rods
- scarves
- floorball rackets
- short shaft rackets similar to ping-pong/tennis rackets
- equipment to improve balance, such as tin can stilts and balance boards
- balloons
- music for physical activity

Outdoors:

- all equipment mentioned in the list for children aged 0–3
- various bats and rackets
- a basket ball hoop or a target for throwing a ball
- hoops
- skipping rods
- elastic bands for French skipping
- a kick bike and different bicycles
- scooters
- plan of the garden, or yard at the day care centre
- pictures for orienteering

In outdoor physical activities, you can also make use of:

- old car tyres
- balance boards
- swings

In addition to the above-mentioned sports equipment, we recommend that you also use handmade sports equipment in the physical activity sessions, e.g.:

- balls with a tail
- newspapers used as sticks, rackets and bats
- sheets
- textile shreds
- cardboard boxes
- milk and juice cartons
- pillows
- kitchen and toilet rolls
- feathers



Description

Published by Department	Ministry of the Education and Culture Department for Youth and Sport Policy			Date of publication November 2016
Authors	Working group on recommendations for physical activity in early childhood Arja Sääkslahti, Chair and Nina Korhonen, Secretary			
Title of publication	Joy, play and doing together – Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood			
Series and publication number	Publications of the Ministry on Education and Culture, Finland 2016:35			
Theme of publication	Sport			
Publication parts				
Abstract	<p>The first recommendations concerning physical activity of under eight-year-olds, Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood education 2005 (Guides of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2005:17) have now been updated based on the initiative of the national Joy in Motion programme. The recommendations were hoped to respond to the changes in the children's living conditions and the amount and types of physical activities over the past ten years. Another aim was to update the scientific base of the recommendations.</p> <p>The new Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood (2016) were prepared as part of the work of the Steering group for health-enhancing physical activity (TEHYLI). The steering group commented on and approved the recommendations compiled by the multidisciplinary national group of experts specifically invited to carry out the task.</p> <p>The recommendations are founded on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The recommendations are based on scientific information on how the adults interacting with under eight-year-olds can facilitate the realisation of the rights of children by comprehensive support for their growth, development, health and wellbeing through physical activities.</p> <p>Studies have shown that physical activity promotes the child's physical, cognitive, psychological, emotional and social development. The scientific knowledge base of the recommendations has also been published (Scientific justification for the recommendations for physical activity in early childhood 2016. Ministry of Education and Culture 2016: 22)</p> <p>The Recommendations for physical activity in early childhood inform about the amount and type of physical activity for the under eight-year-old, roles of the physical, psychological and social environments, and planning and implementation of guided physical exercise and education on exercise as part of early childhood education.</p> <p>The recommendations are intended for parents, early childhood education teachers, physical exercise and healthcare professionals, and other organisations and individuals involved in promoting physical activity, health or wellbeing among under eight-year-olds.</p>			
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Kuvailulehti

Julkaisija Osasto	Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö Nuoriso- ja liikuntapolitiikan osasto			Julkaisuaika Marraskuu 2016
Tekijä(t)	Varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suositusten asiantuntijaryhmä, puheenjohtaja Arja Sääkslahti ja sihteeri Nina Korhonen			
Julkaisun nimi	Iloa, leikkiä ja yhdessä tekemistä - varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suositukset			
Julkaisusarjan nimi ja numero	Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2016:35			
Julkaisun teema	liikunta			
Julkaisun osat				
Tiivistelmä	<p>Ensimmäiset suomalaiset alle kahdeksanvuotiaiden lasten liikuntaan tarkoitetut suositukset, Varhaiskasvatuksen liikunnan suositukset 2005 (Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön oppaita 2005:17), esitettiin päivitettäväksi valtakunnallisessa Ilo kasvaa liikkuen – ohjelman kehittämistyössä. Suositusten toivottiin vastaavan viimeisen kymmenen vuoden aikana tapahtuneita muutoksia lasten elinolosuhteissa sekä liikumisen määrässä ja laadussa. Tavoitteeksi asetettiin myös suositusten tutkimusperustan päivittäminen.</p> <p>Uudet Varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suositukset (2016) valmisteltiin osana opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön sekä sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön yhdessä asettaman ja koordinoiman Terveyttä ja hyvinvointia edistävän liikunnan (TEHYLI) –ohjausryhmän työtä. TEHYLI –ohjausryhmä kommentoi ja hyväksyi tehtävään erikseen kutsutun monitieteisen kansallisen asiantuntijaryhmän kokoamat suositukset.</p> <p>Suosituksien taustalla on YK:n lapsen oikeuksien yleissopimus. Suositukset perustuvat tutkimustietoon siitä, miten alle kahdeksanvuotiaiden lasten kanssa toimivat aikuiset voivat mahdollistaa lasten oikeuksien toteutumisen tukemalla lasten kokonaisvaltaista kasvua, kehitystä, terveyttä ja hyvinvointia liikunnan avulla.</p> <p>Tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet, että liikunnalla voidaan tukea lapsen fyysistä, kognitiivista, psyykkistä, emotionaalista ja sosiaalista kehittymistä. Suositusten tieteelliset perusteet on julkaistu erillisenä julkaisuna (Tieteelliset perusteet varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suosituksille 2016. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2016: 22)</p> <p>Varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suositukset antavat ohjeita alle kahdeksanvuotiaiden lasten fyysisen aktiivisuuden määrästä ja laadusta, fyysisen, psyykkisen ja sosiaalisen ympäristön rooleista sekä ohjatun liikunnan ja liikuntakasvatuksen suunnittelusta ja toteuttamisesta osana varhaiskasvatusta.</p> <p>Varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suositukset on tarkoitettu lasten vanhempien, varhaiskasvatus-, liikunta- ja terveydenhuollon ammattilaisten sekä muiden alle kahdeksanvuotiaiden lasten liikunnan, terveyden tai hyvinvoinnin edistämiseen osallistuvien yhteisöjen ja yksilöiden käyttöön.</p>			
Asiasanat	lapset, fyysinen aktiivisuus, liikkuminen, liikunta, hyvinvointi, suositukset, terveys, terveyden edistäminen, varhaiskasvatus			
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Presentationsblad

Utgivare Avdelningen	Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet Ungdoms- och idrottspolitiska avdelningen		Utgivningsdatum November 2016
Författare	Sakkunniggruppen för rekommendationer för fysisk aktivitet under de första åren, ordförande Arja Sääkslahti och sekreterare Nina Korhonen		
Publikationens namn	Glädje, lek och gemensamma aktiviteter - Rekommendationer för fysisk aktivitet under de första åren		
Seriens namn och nummer	Undervisnings- och kulturministeriets publikationer 2016:35		
Publikationens tema	Sport		
Publikationens delar			
Referat	<p>I utvecklingsarbetet för det riksomfattande programmet Glädje i rörelse föreslogs att man uppdaterar de första finländska motionsrekommendationerna för barn under åtta år, Motionsrekommendationer för förskoleverksamheten 2005 (Social- och hälsovårdsministeriets handböcker 2005:17). Förhoppningen var att rekommendationerna skulle motsvara de senaste tio årens förändringar i barnens levnadsförhållanden samt i mängden och kvaliteten på motionen. Som mål ställde man även att uppdatera forskningsgrunden för rekommendationerna.</p> <p>Den nya Rekommendationerna för fysisk aktivitet under de första åren (2016) bereddes som en del av arbetet för styrgruppen för hälso- och välfärdsfrämjande motion (TEHYLI), som tillsattes och samordnades av undervisnings- och kulturministeriet och social- och hälsovårdsministeriet. Styrgruppen kommenterade och godkände rekommendationerna som sammanställda av en särskilt tillkallad, tvärvetenskaplig nationell expertgrupp.</p> <p>Bakom rekommendationerna finns FN:s konvention om barnets rättigheter. Rekommendationerna grundar sig på forskning om hur vuxna som arbetar eller vistas med barn under åtta år kan möjliggöra verkställandet av barnens rättigheter genom att stöda med motion barnets helhetsmässiga uppväxt, utveckling, hälsa och välfärd.. Undersökningar har visat att man med motion kan stöda barnets fysiska, kognitiva, psykiska, emotionella och sociala utveckling. De vetenskapliga grunderna för rekommendationerna har publicerats separat (Tieteelliset perusteet varhaisvuosien fyysisen aktiivisuuden suosituksille 2016. Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet 2016: 22)</p> <p>Rekommendationerna för fysisk aktivitet under de första åren ger anvisningar om mängden och kvaliteten på fysisk aktivitet för barn under åtta år, den psykiska och sociala miljöns roll samt om planeringen och genomförandet av handledd motion och motionsfostran som en del av småbarnspedagogiken.</p> <p>Rekommendationerna är avsedda för föräldrar, yrkespersoner inom småbarnspedagogiken, motionen och hälsovården samt övriga samfund och personer som deltar i främjandet av motion, hälsa och välfärd för barn under åtta år.</p>		
Nyckelord	barn, fysisk aktivitet, rörelse, motion, välfärd, rekommendationer, hälsa, hälsofrämjande, småbarnspedagogik		
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