Get kids on the go!

British Heart Foundation
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Why should you encourage your child to be active?

As a parent you want your child to be healthy and happy. Frequent physical activity can help by:

- improving health – physical activity can help build a healthy heart, develop strong muscles and bones and may help reduce the risk of some chronic diseases in later life
- reducing body fat – the number of young people in the UK who are obese (severely overweight) is increasing and obesity can have a significant effect on health, including the development of diabetes
- reducing anxiety and stress
- helping your child feel good about themselves
- improving social and moral development
- increasing opportunities for your child to mix with others and make friends.

Physical activity can help your child build a healthy heart and develop strong muscles and bones.
Positive experiences of physical activity in childhood and adolescence will also lay valuable foundations for lifelong participation.

If your child is to enjoy all the benefits of activity, they need to be active at home and during their leisure time as well as at school – most schools do not have time to provide all of the daily activity your child needs.

This is where you can help – read on and find out how.
How much activity should your child do?

To improve health, it is recommended that:

"children and young people should aim to participate in activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour every day"

If your child is only taking part in a little activity at the moment, they should build up to this level gradually, starting with an initial target of 30 minutes.

The one hour of activity doesn't all have to be done at once - it can be built up over the day through, for example, four 15 minute periods of activity, three 20 minutes or two 30 minutes. This could include walking to and from school, PE lessons, active play with friends at breaktimes and out of school, sport, or structured exercise.

Examples of moderate intensity activities include:

- brisk walking
- active play
- swimming
- cycling
- dance
- most sports
- games
It is also recommended that:

“at least twice a week, some activities should help to enhance and maintain muscular strength and flexibility and bone health.”

For children of primary school age this could include:

- climbing
- skipping
- jumping
- gymnastics