

Kids are here to move

A holistic development & wellness guide for busy families

Powered by the minds of Virgin Active



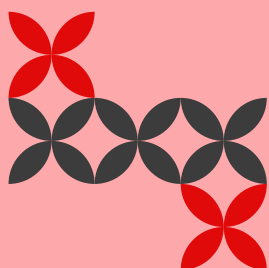
Virgin active
KIDS

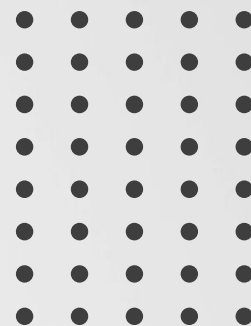




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Foreword

They say it takes a village, and Virgin Active is proud to support and empower parents and guardians as part of their village. This expert-authored guide provides 15 x 15 minute chapters that provide all you need to know for your kids' optimum development.

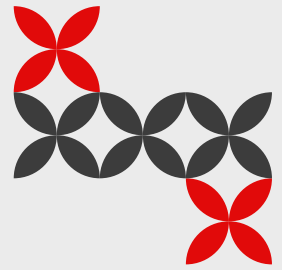
A child's formative years are some of the most vital for their physical and psychological development, and we know that there is a strong correlation between physical activity and cognitive function. It's no secret that many South African kids are not meeting the recommended amount of daily physical activity needed - **more than 50% in fact.**

As a result, South Africa faces long-term developmental consequences for our youth due to the lack of activity, including the risk of chronic conditions as well as a rise in obesity statistics. Virgin Active aspires to empower South Africans to be active, healthy, and to focus on holistic wellness which is why we've gathered the leading minds in nutrition, sports science, mobility, Kinderkinetics and mindfulness to produce this resource.

In search of 'just 15 more minutes' in their days, parents and caregivers continue to balance work, home life, raising kids, and finding time in their schedules for themselves. With the launch of our first ever childhood development guide, we remove the pressure of sifting through millions of Google Search results on all things kids-related, ranging from movement and mobility to nutrition and mental wellbeing.

Our e-book has been developed in partnership with our experts to provide these bite sized 15 minute easy-to-read chapters guaranteed to take the guesswork out of giving our kids the best we can in life - and to set them on a journey to wellness and living happy, active lifestyles.





More about Virgin Active

Living life Active!

With over 130 clubs across South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, Virgin Active is on a mission to get people healthier, happier, and prioritising wellness - no matter their age. The health and mental wellness benefits of exercise are undeniable and to help our members embrace an active lifestyle we have developed both an in-club and online offering with the help of our Personal Trainers, engaging group exercise classes, and advice from our experts on all things health, wellness, exercise, and fitness related.

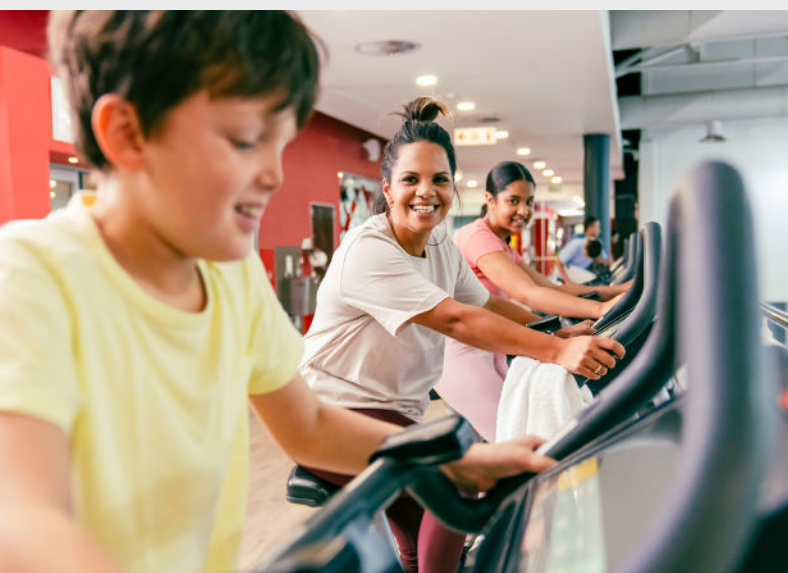
Our clubs offer a wide range of exercise, relaxation, and co-working activities under one roof.

Top quality cardio equipment, strength training equipment, world-class heated pool facilities with \pm 6 lanes, functional and mobility training on the gym floor and Personal Trainers to guide you through the moves and meet your goals. Our comprehensive online training offering gives members access to all the workouts they need while on the move or at home.

We also offer top-notch group exercise classes such as GRID, Boxing, Yoga, Pilates, Cycle and Dance which offer effective and fun workouts. We are also home to a variety of non-exercise facilities such as co-working spaces, saunas, steam rooms and access to Health Professionals which include Biokineticists, Chiropractors and Physiotherapists.

Many of our clubs are home to special kids-only facilities, purpose built for safety and fun. Club-V facilities cater for kids between 6 weeks and 7 years and Club-V Max facilities cater for kids from 6 weeks to 13 years. Kids are here to move, and we are here to help them do that in ways backed by science and the expertise of our professionals. The programmes are developed to be fun and engaging to promote a lifelong love of movement.

We've also made it even easier to stick to workout goals and a good routine with support from our club staff and through our digital platforms including our app and website and are continuously developing new goal-based programmes to help our members reach not only their fitness goals but their nutrition and wellness goals too.



Virgin Active clubs are more than 'get fit' destinations, but rather a place where we welcome and encourage you to get started, get confident and thrive on your journey to a fit, active, happy lifestyle. Whether you're into running, riding, swimming, lifting, bending or stretching, we've got what you need to keep your whole family moving.

Not sure where to start? No problem. [Click here to sign up](#) or [here for a guest pass](#) to try out a club near you!

Let's move together!





Virgin Active & kids

Kids are here to move

Children are not as active as they used to be and are more often behind screens and indoors instead of following their natural need to move. The COVID-19 pandemic only made things worse.

An active kid is a happy kid, whether they jump, bounce, laugh, or learn new things through activities and play. Not only does physical activity have a host of health and wellness benefits for kids, but more importantly, active kids are also more likely to become active adults.

Our philosophy is simple. Getting kids moving when they're young and instilling healthy habits in them is a springboard to a lifelong journey of wellness. As experts in the health and fitness industry, we have created the experiences and spaces to offer our younger members a fun environment to hone their movement skills and to provide parents with secure facilities for their kids to move in while they work out.

It's no secret that regular exercise can:

- Help strengthen the heart
- Help build stronger lungs
- Help build strong bones and muscles
- Help reduce blood sugar levels, which reduces the risk of developing diabetes

But did you know that aside from the health benefits, exercise also has mental wellness and holistic wellbeing benefits, such as:

- Increased confidence
- Helping to build cognitive skills
- Creating the groundwork for cognitive and executive function
- Helping to manage stress and anxiety
- Improved sleep

FAST FACT

After engaging in physical activity, kids show improved brain function, find it easier to concentrate on school-related tasks and show improved mathematics, reading, writing, and spelling skills.

Backed by science

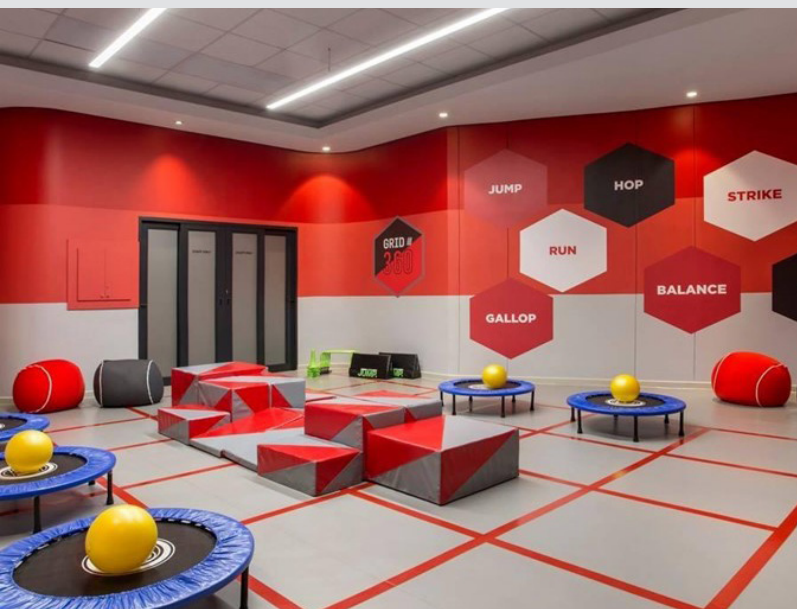
The movement programmes that are run in our Club-V and Club-V Max facilities have been developed through extensive work with Stellenbosch Kinderkinetics and along with our team of fully trained crew members, we offer a one-of-a-kind fitness experience for the entire family.

For babies as young as 6 weeks, we offer a fully equipped nursery where littlies can nap and play.

Our toddler programmes focus on developing key motor development skills.

Our 4 to 7s focus on active play and mastering movement skills.

Our 8 to 13s get to grips with agility, speed, and functional movement skills. They are also allowed to train with you on the gym floor.



About our experts

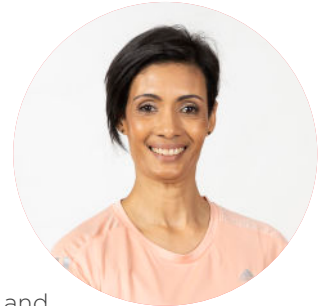


This book has been created in collaboration with 9 experts across the fields of health, nutrition, fitness, and wellbeing for both children and adults.

Our expert contributors include:

Dr Eileen Africa | Founder of Stellenbosch Kinderkinetics and Virgin Active's expert on kids

Dr Eileen Africa holds a PhD in Sport Science from Stellenbosch University and is a proud mom of two. She is the founder of **Stellenbosch Kinderkinetics**, based in the Western Cape and has a passion for instilling an appreciation for movement as a way of life for kids, by promoting active lifestyles from a young age, with a focus on the positive socio-cognitive benefits that movement has in all aspects of their lives. Kinderkinetics aims to holistically develop children (0-13 years old) by stimulating, remedying, and promoting specific motor skills and physical development, through physical activity.



Dr Phathokuhle Zondi | Sports and Exercise Medicine (SEM) Physician and Virgin Active expert on all things health and fitness

Dr Phathokuhle Zondi holds an undergraduate medical degree from the University of Cape Town, as well as an MSc in Sports Medicine and MBA from the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) and has two children that keep her on her toes. As a Sports and Exercise Medicine (SEM) Physician experienced in clinical sports medicine, executive management, and leadership, Dr Zondi's life mission is to use sport/physical activity as a tool for socioeconomic development and as a platform that facilitates transformation, diversity and inclusion. She is the current Chairperson of the Medical Commission for the South African Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) and is the first female to sit on the Sharks Board of Directors and is a member and past President of the South African Sports Medicine Association.



Catherine Coupar | Virgin Active's National Junior Member Manager

Catherine Coupar holds a Masters degree in Sport Science from the University of Stellenbosch. She is the National Junior Member Manager for Virgin Active South Africa. Since joining Virgin Active in 2011 she has used her keen insight into how kids of all ages can have fun while learning and working on their rudimentary, fundamental and core skills, to take Virgin Active's Club-V and Club-V Max from a crèche that happened to be located at a gym, to an interactive fitness and movement centre for kids up to the age of 13 years across 113 gyms, with over 350 crew members. Her expertise and experience come together to create a seamless customer experience that nurtures a lifelong relationship with movement and being active from a young age.



Ceri Hannan | Virgin Active's National Product Development Manager

Heading up the Program Development and Innovation for Virgin Active South Africa, **Ceri Hannan** has 35 years' experience within the Health and Fitness industry, during which time his career has taken him across the world in various capacities in addition to being a husband and father. As the former British Aerobic Champion, he represented the United Kingdom at World and European level. A natural progression from competitive aerobics saw Ceri develop a reputation for delivering unique presentations to both the Fitness Professional as well as the consumer market, where his user-friendly, fun and educational style has seen him instruct in the UK, Russia, Spain, Iceland, Israel, America, Australia, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, India and South Africa.



Joëlle Sleebos | Virgin Active's Head of Yoga

Joëlle is a Yoga teacher, practice facilitator, and believes in living an extraordinary life through her work, travel, and passion for nature and healing. Heading up the Yoga offering for Virgin Active South Africa, Joëlle's passion is to help people connect through Yoga. With a firm belief that Yoga allows people to be the best version of themselves both on and off the mat, she uses the practice to help members challenge their bodies to reach places their minds don't believe they can go.



Kim Hofmann | Registered Dietitian and Virgin Active's expert on all things nutrition

Kim Hofmann holds a BSc Medical (Honours) in Nutrition and Dietetics and a BSc (Honours) in Psychology. She is a Registered Dietitian and a mom with a passion for combining her psychological studies with nutrition and food. She works with a wide range of people from young to old, from those seeking to lose weight to those with special medical needs (sports, allergies, eating disorders, hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol). She is dedicated to delivering nutrition information that is accurate, practical and easy to follow, with a specialised interest in behavioural shifts beyond weight loss and the role that adult habit modelling can have on the young.



Dr Adrian Rotunno | Sports and Exercise Medicine (SEM) Physician and Virgin Active expert on all things health and fitness-related

Dr Adrian Rotunno holds an MBChB, MSc Sports and Exercise Medicine, BSc Physiotherapy, BPhys Ed and specialises in Sports and Exercise Medicine. A husband and father, he is also a director and clinician at the Cape Sports Medicine medical practice based at the Sports Science Institute of South Africa, and a team physician with the UAE Team Emirates Pro Cycling Team. His interests and research include working with all levels of endurance athletes, race medicine, and musculoskeletal ultrasound and one of his long-term goals is to broaden awareness of healthy lifestyles, and to improve clinical access to sports and exercise medicine in the public sector.



Arthur Ramoroka | Tiger Brands Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist and a friend of Virgin Active

Arthur Ramoroka holds a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and Master of Science degree in Food, Nutrition Science and Innovation from Manchester Metropolitan University. As a Registered Dietitian with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), he is passionate about evidence-based nutrition and translating the science of nutrition into simple, practical lifestyle messages that inspire people to lead healthier lives. With 10+ years of experience in clinical, food and nutrition fields, he has dedicated his career to helping people lead healthier and happier lives.



Janna Kretzmar | Founder of the Earthchild Project and a friend of Virgin Active

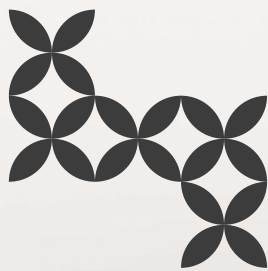
Janna holds a degree in Anthropology and Psychology. She is the Founder of the **Earthchild Project** which is committed to culturing and nurturing a new generation of conscious and empowered young leaders. She is a qualified Yoga instructor and is passionate about providing kids with positive role models, high quality programmes and valuable skills to set them up for confident, conscious, and sustainable life. Some of the children who started Yoga classes with Janna from as young as 6 years of age are now young leaders working within the Earthchild Project continuing the impactful work that the programme does.



The kids are(n't) alright

The state of kids in 2022

Dr Eileen Africa & Dr Phathokuhle Zondi



South African kids are less physically active, more sedentary, spending more time in front of screens and eating fewer nutritious meals than ever before - with potential long-term negative health effects.

It's impossible to discuss the State of Our Children in South Africa without considering the **impact that two years of COVID-19-related lockdowns** have had on their mental and physical health. Our kid's physical activity levels as a result of lockdowns and their less physically active lives have proven insufficient to promote health and prevent cardiovascular and other chronic diseases. **Global physical activity levels have dropped** - and the statistics in SA are not any different.



Activity levels dropped almost immediately

The closure of schools and parks as well as the cancellation of sports and physical activity classes played a major role in preventing our kids from reaching the recommended levels of physical activity required to help them develop and ensure healthy lifestyles. As early as 2012, silent pandemics of obesity and physical inactivity existed - and lockdown only amplified the challenges posed by those pandemics.

A decrease in physical activity may lead to an increase in undesirable mental health outcomes, resulting in an increase in anxiety and depression during lockdown - something well-documented in adults, but more difficult to recognise and manage in our kids.

Physical activity in schools is associated with better **academic achievement**, on top of health benefits including cardiorespiratory fitness; strong bones and muscles; weight control; reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression; and reducing the risk of developing health conditions such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. It's also vital for age-appropriate physical, social, psycho-social and emotional developmental needs.

Preschool-aged children should be physically active throughout the day for healthy growth and development, accumulating at least 180 minutes of physical activity each day, at least 60 minutes of which should be energetic play that raises their heart and breathing rates.

School-aged children and adolescents should do at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity that raises their heart rate, makes them breathe harder and sweat more.

Their needs weren't met for nearly two years!

Children and adolescents have higher physical activity needs than adults, which have been more difficult to meet during the lockdown period for a variety of reasons. Whether it was for physical or COVID-19 safety reasons, kids were forced to stay at home where they had smaller places to play than at school and their parents had to work from home so they couldn't get their full attention like they would their teacher's at school. The rise in the use of technology - whether for virtual schooling for those lucky enough to be able to participate that way or as a tool for distracting kids while parents finished virtual meetings - has also played a pivotal role.

The most common physical activities during lockdown were free play, unstructured activity, and walks - generally under indoor or limited circumstances and mostly by younger children. Older children experienced greater decreases in physical activity and greater increases in sedentary behaviours - but all children were affected, to a certain degree, with more than 50% of our youth population showing **decreased physical activity under lockdown conditions**. While total sleep time decreased due to stress and anxiety, sedentary time and screen time have increased, as energy levels have dropped.

We're not meeting global benchmarks

Slovenia's children are among the most physically active kids globally and despite national physical activity interventions throughout the pandemic, research shows that two months of self-isolation erased a decade's worth of health gains acquired through national public health policies. Physical Education in schools in South Africa was one of the major contributors to helping our kids meet their activity goals but, having undergone several policy changes that diminished its importance, it was either removed entirely from the school curriculum or was presented without clear guidelines and models to deliver meaningful outcomes. In some schools, it was only added back in on an ad-hoc basis just before the arrival of COVID-19. **Where the promotion of childhood physical activity sits low on the government's agenda, the impact on our kids is likely to be far worse.**

The most recent measure of childhood health is the [Healthy Active Kids South Africa \(HAKSA\) Report Card](#) from 2018, which measured physical activity and nutrition of South African children and adolescents (3-18 years old). Our children were given grades from A-F for a range of indicators that show

us how well they are doing in these categories, which range from health behaviours to environmental factors.

Pre-pandemic, about half of SA's kids were meeting the recommendation for levels of physical activity,

averaging between 57 and 65 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per day. Levels of physical activity appeared to be higher in younger South African kids compared to older children, but there were several barriers to preschool-aged kids engaging in active play including crime, lack of resources, space and facilities in lower income areas and presence of screens in higher income areas.

We received a 'D' grade in 'organised sport participation' as there had been no increase in our kids participating in organised sport since the previous report in 2016 and no evidence of new interventions, strategies or policies to improve participation levels.

Even then, our grade for sedentary behaviours was an 'F', with kids found to be spending an average of just over 3 hours on screens per day (not including schoolwork), with only a third of children meeting the screen time recommendation for their age. A study of adolescents linked the use of screen-based social networking with increased risky behaviours.



The link between physical and functional is more important than ever

World Health Organisation (WHO)-reviewed Physical Activity and Academic Achievement evidence suggests that **physical activity is tightly linked to academic results**. It showed that being active often, explaining why it is important, and ensuring that regular activity is part of the curriculum was an important way to protect child health and improve academic performance. In the WHO European Region, those between 5 and 17 years spend nearly two-thirds of their school time being sedentary and only 5% doing physical activities. This is not dissimilar to the state of play in South African schools. According to the review, when you children do more physical activity, it impacts their health, wellbeing and how well they do in the classroom.

The danger that these short-term decreases in physical activity and increases in sedentary behaviour might become permanent could lead to an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases in our kids. Our older children's adoption of these new behavioural habits of physical inactivity during the pandemic could prove more difficult to change, post-pandemic, than that of our younger kids. **The World Health Organisation (WHO) lists physical inactivity as the fourth-highest risk factor in global mortality, accounting for 6% of global deaths.**





Obesity rates continue to expand

Global obesity prevalence is steadily rising due to increases in sedentary lifestyles, which has been further exacerbated by the pandemic - in South Africa, it's estimated that **16% of our kids are overweight or obese**. Diet plays a major role here, alongside the volume and regularity of physical activity. **Without a balanced diet, physical activity won't make a huge difference** in helping combat the obesity pandemic. When we look at the combination of increased sugar-sweetened, cheaper food options which South African kids regularly consume, the prevalence rates of obesity will increase even more. The World Health Organisation recommends a maximum sugar intake of less than 10% of a child's daily energy intake - equal to less than 25g or 6 teaspoons of sugar per day. An article in the South African Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that children in South Africa consume between 40 and 60g (10 to 15 teaspoons) of sugar per day - and that teenagers consume as much as 100g (25 teaspoons) of sugar per day.

It's not too late - our kids were born to move so let's get them moving!

As South Africa emerges from - or at least, better manages - lockdowns and restrictions, it's going to be vital to provide safe and enjoyable opportunities for physical activity among our kids. There is an urgent need to provide guidance for a phased approach to ensuring access to safe, enjoyable, and equitable opportunities for physical activity in children and adolescents. The choice of activity is also important to improve participation and get our kids moving again, without increasing the risk of virus transmission. This is easier said than done in the conditions under which most of our population live, as the social and economic impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated existing safety issues.

Our country already operates with a strained healthcare system with limited resources due to dealing with the burden of TB, HIV and COVID-19. Adding the additional weight of lifestyle diseases brought about by low levels of activity under pandemic conditions will place it under even more strain.

It may turn out that the effects of decreased physical activity and increased sedentary behaviour lead to a pandemic within a pandemic - and it's one that can't be eased by vaccination, but rather by action.

Let Virgin Active be part of your village and guide the development of your kids!

That's why we at Virgin Active have developed this concise guide - perfect for those few and far between 15-minute gaps in the madness. It's a quick dip-in, dip-out resource for hard-working parents and busy kids, designed to bring the two together for fun activities, covering topics that can be explored in 15 minutes with activities to try out alongside the learnings - all to set the base for a mentally and physically healthy life.





15 minutes of kids' development fundamentals

Dr Eileen Africa & Dr Phathokuhle Zondi





There are some basics to getting your child moving - keeping their relationship with physical activity positive.

Regular physical activity is not simply about fitness. It's an essential part of children's overall development that boosts psychological wellbeing, confidence, social skills, concentration, and healthy sleeping patterns. Physical activity also plays a role in developing their ability to make friends, take turns and share.

How much activity is enough activity?

The general guideline for physical activity is that all **children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise per day**, but the reality is that some age groups need up to 180 minutes (structured or unstructured). In younger children, an hour is just not enough as they continue to grow and develop - requiring additional focus to be placed on being active.

While there is plenty of debate around whether structured or unstructured play is better for kids, the truth is a combination of both is advantageous. Both have benefits for children aged 18 months to 3 years. Certain skills will develop naturally - you're unlikely to have to teach your child to run, for example, but skills like catching and throwing need to be taught and practised. The purpose of this kind of structured play isn't to turn them into a professional athlete - it's simply the introduction and practising of skills. Structured sessions are more engaging, interactive and teach specific skills.



Shuffle, hop, skip

Building blocks (18 months to 3 years)

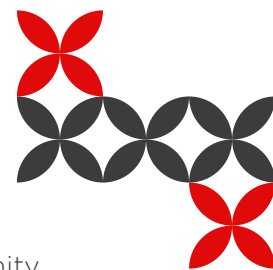
Younger children develop at an astonishing rate and the acquisition and development of Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) is essential to their holistic development.

FMS vary by age group, starting with walking and progressing through skipping (locomotor skills), catching, throwing (manipulative skills) and balance (stability skills) - it's a checklist of sorts.

Many parents don't consider movement difficulties to be an issue, attributing their child's lack of mastery of a movement skill to be because they 'aren't sporty' - but with FMS, these basic skills are essential to their holistic development. There's plenty of leeway in terms of the timeline - not

every child will reach milestones at the same stage or age, but delays in FMS development can have knock-on effects if they're not addressed. These skills are also essential for your child's social, emotional, and cognitive development and have strong links to academic performance. Very physically active children typically perform better academically and concentrate better.

Between the ages of 18 months and 3 years, children are walking, running, kicking, and throwing. They are naturally active at this age, and parents should encourage their kids to participate in a variety of fun activities to build their skills, co-ordination and confidence. At this age they should have more active free play (unstructured) than adult-led (structured) physical activity with the **emphasis being on enjoyment and fun(damental) skills development.**



School rules

Parents make choices between preschools for many reasons, including proximity, cost, and facilities available. Studies of preschoolers at facilities with versus without sufficient outdoor areas, conducted with the use of pedometers, showed that kids with more outside space and better facilities move more and are inclined to spend more time outdoors. Even kids whose activity was boosted by more free play indoors, didn't move as much as their counterparts with more outdoor space.

Consider the environment of the preschools you are considering and how it can help encourage physical activity. You need to question the school's philosophy around play and physical activity and get a thorough understanding of whether the environment is right for your child.

As an example, for the older age groups, when South Africa's education policy changed to remove Physical Education from the school timetable to allow for more academic subjects, learners' concentration and performance dropped. Some schools have restored it to the syllabus, but it'll take years before improvements are clearly visible.

Physically fun

You'll hear from plenty of our contributors to this book that the key to promoting **a healthy relationship with physical activity is fun and that it should never be punitive**. Physical activity doesn't have to mean running laps or doing jumping jacks. Any kind of physical activity that gets the major muscle groups moving and the heart and breathing rates up, is good for kids.

Keeping the activities age-appropriate is also key. You can ensure your child gets enough exercise by giving them opportunities to do what comes naturally: getting outside and playing. The value of parental participation is also huge, since kids learn by mimicking their caregivers. If you have a healthy relationship with exercise and nutrition, your child is more likely to follow suit and you'll **build a closer mental and emotional connection**, too.



Fundamental motor skills

All children are different, and while they progress at different rates, the table below outlines an array of motor skill movements and the ages at which they should be introduced and mastered.

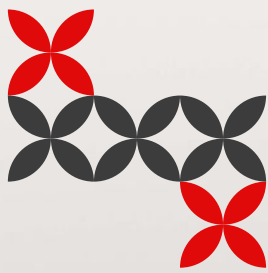
Fundamental motor skill	Before 2 years	Age 2 - 3	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
Running	Introduced				Mastered		
Long jump		Introduced				Mastered	
Jump for height		Introduced				Mastered	
Hop			Introduced			Mastered	
Gallop			Introduced			Mastered	
Skip				Introduced		Mastered	
Throw	Introduced					Mastered	
Catch		Introduced				Mastered	
Kick	Introduced				Mastered		
Strike		Introduced					Mastered

The above can be used as a guideline and is in no way prescriptive. It is important to recognise that kids develop at their own pace and if yours isn't on track with these milestones that is ok. Chat to a Kinderineticist if you are concerned about their movement skills development.



15 minutes of full-body activities

Dr Eileen Africa & Catherine Coupar



Full-body exercises aren't as scary as they sound.

Activating all the major muscle groups in the body in one set of exercises sounds challenging - but everyday childhood games like **'head, shoulders, knees & toes'** and **'wheelbarrow'** do exactly that. Play is the best way to inspire physical activity in kids and helps them develop a diverse repertoire of basic movements referred to as Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS).



Wheelbarrow races

What are fundamental movement skills?

FMS are basic movements that need large groups of muscles to work together to achieve a task like walking, running, skipping, catching, and kicking. Mastery of FMS before the age of 8 provides the building blocks for the development of more advanced and complex skills later in life. That is why it is key to get them active early.

Think of the progression as a triangle:



From 13, kids are ready to participate in sports on a more competitive level and properly understand the rules of the game - here they are emotionally mature enough to understand the principles of winning or losing

From 8 to 13 they start to engage in more sport-specific skills as they participate in team sports at school.

Kids under 8 need to master FMS, where they explore and learn how their bodies work.



Animal walks



Movement chain

Full-body benefits

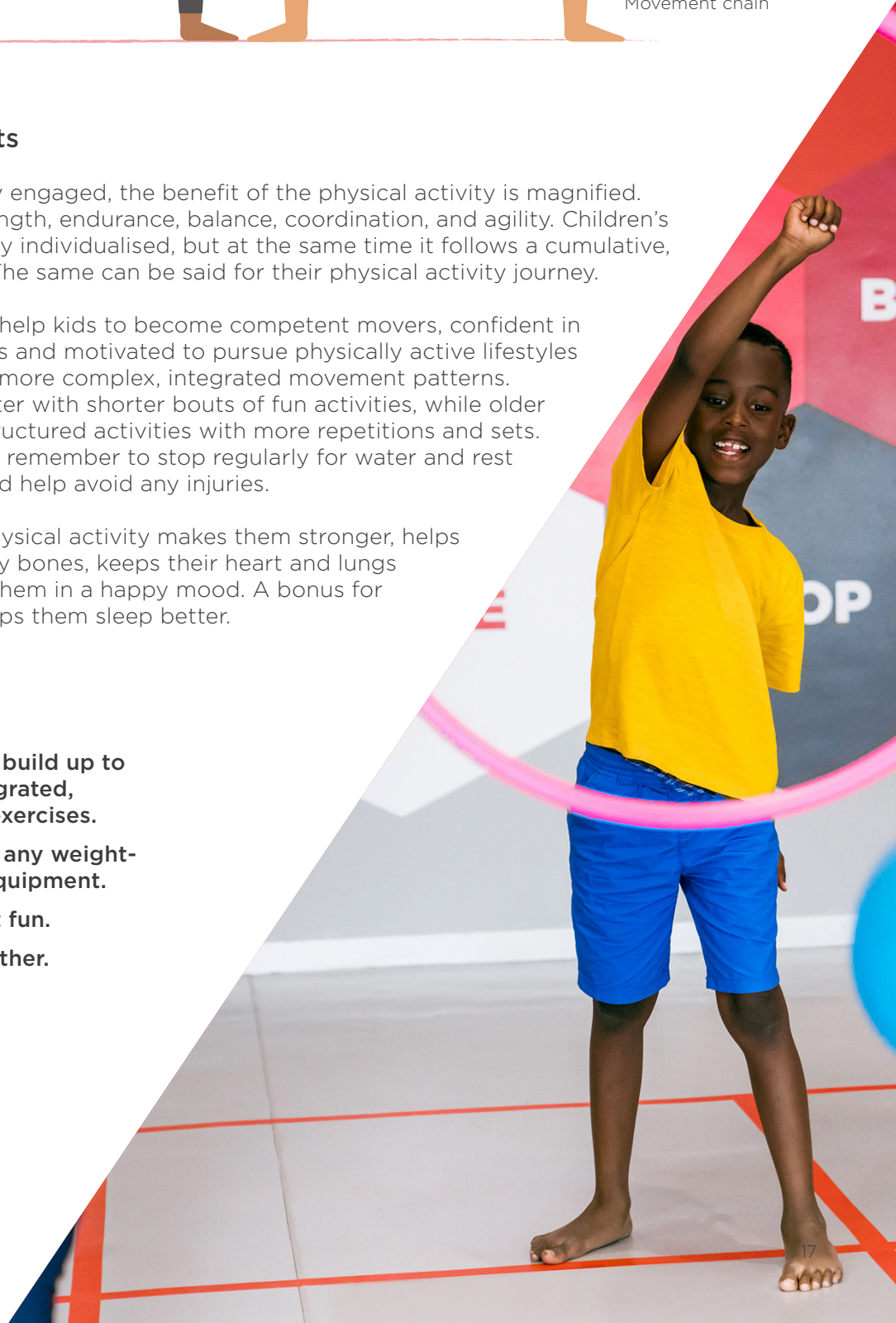
With the whole body engaged, the benefit of the physical activity is magnified. Benefits include strength, endurance, balance, coordination, and agility. Children's development is highly individualised, but at the same time it follows a cumulative, sequential process. The same can be said for their physical activity journey.

Physical activity will help kids to become competent movers, confident in their own motor skills and motivated to pursue physically active lifestyles before evolving into more complex, integrated movement patterns. Younger kids do better with shorter bouts of fun activities, while older kids can adjust to structured activities with more repetitions and sets. It's also important to remember to stop regularly for water and rest breaks to hydrate and help avoid any injuries.

Tell your kids that physical activity makes them stronger, helps them develop healthy bones, keeps their heart and lungs strong, and will put them in a happy mood. A bonus for you is that it also helps them sleep better.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do slowly build up to more integrated, complex exercises.
- Don't add any weight-bearing equipment.
- Do keep it fun.
- Do it together.



Full-body fun

With the whole body engaged, the benefit of the physical activity is magnified. Benefits include strength, endurance, balance, coordination, and agility. Remember to clear the area before starting.



Animal walks:

Frog Jumps: Squat and place your hands on the floor in between your knees, then using jump forward and land with your hands and feet on the ground



Wheelbarrows

- Have your child lie on their stomach in push up position, then lift them holding their legs (not just their feet)
- Your child will need to engage their core to keep their body as still as possible while they walk using their hands as you “push” them around
- If there are several children and adults, do a wheelbarrow race over a short distance



Movement chain

- With 2 players, one player takes a turn to think of a movement or exercise (like a push up)
- The second player does that movement and then comes up with another (like a star jump)
- The first player then does both movements and comes up with a third and so on, until one of them forgets the order

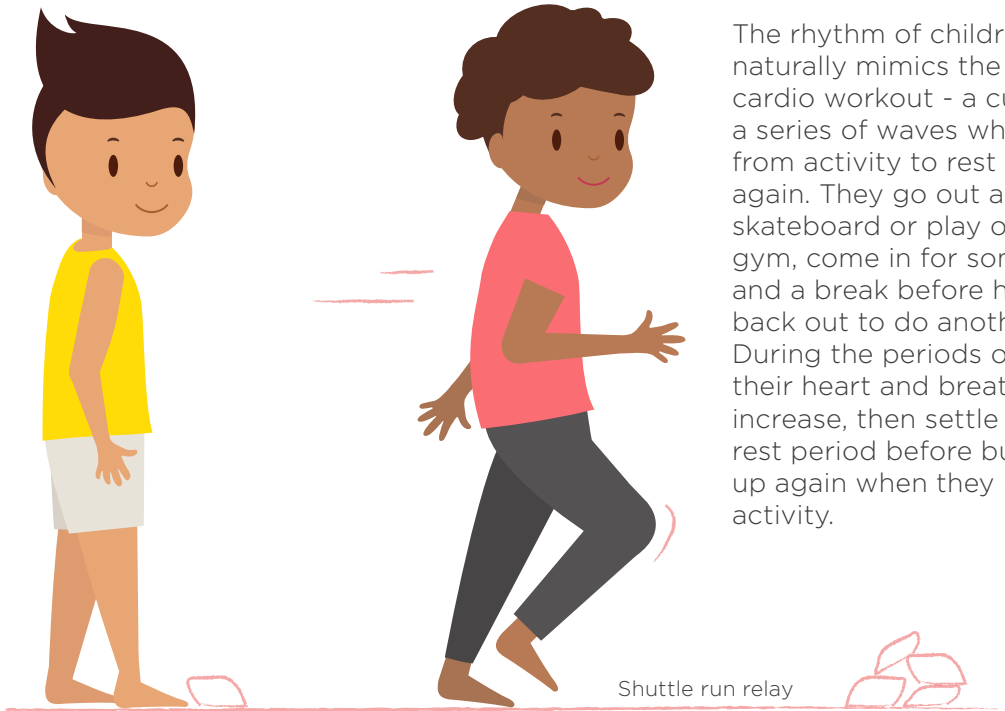
15 minutes of kids' cardio activities



Catherine Coupar & Ceri Hannan



The easiest way to ensure your kids have a healthy cardiovascular system is to just let them play.



The rhythm of children's play naturally mimics the ideal cardio workout - a curve like a series of waves which flows from activity to rest and back again. They go out and swim, skateboard or play on the jungle gym, come in for some water and a break before heading back out to do another activity. During the periods of activity, their heart and breathing rates increase, then settle during the rest period before building back up again when they return to activity.

Cardio benefits

Cardiovascular activity ('cardio') is moderate to vigorous activity that increases heart and breathing rates, which increases oxygen and blood flow. This kind of exercise has **benefits for heart health, mental health, and improved sleep**. It can also help with weight management because of its effects on the metabolism. Cardio usually involves repetitive, rhythmic use of your large muscle groups - exactly what the running, jumping, skating, and swimming of regular childhood play does.

Ideally, kids should participate in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity most days of the week. This should be coupled with muscle and bone-strengthening activities at least three days a week. But that doesn't mean they need to do an hour of burpees - just make sure they do enough of what comes naturally spread throughout the day. Organised sports, for example netball, soccer or tennis can mimic this natural activity - the kids aren't continually running around non-stop, they're sprinting for a few seconds and then resting. That's the perfect cardio scenario.





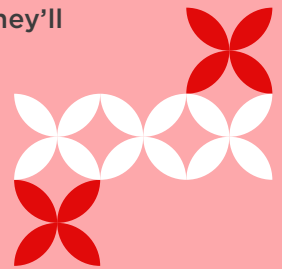
Play is exercise, exercise should be play

Making exercise fun and part of daily life is key to setting your kids up for a healthy, active lifestyle. Telling them that they need to go for a run that will last longer than their attention span is setting them up for failure - but taking them for a bike ride, a clamber on the jungle gym or a 'fetch' session with the dog has the same effect, with an added fun factor. It must be sustainable - and it's not about measuring goals in terms of being able to play longer or without breathing as hard.

Physical activity should be something that puts a smile on your face. That way you'll come back and do it again. Tell anyone they have to do 20 minutes of cardio and they'll resist - tell your child they can play on the playground for 20 minutes and they'll be gone before you can finish your sentence.

While we know physical activity is important, consider it more as a **FUNction** of a child's day.

Keep it light, fun, engaging, and different where possible and they'll keep asking for more.



DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do integrate getting active as a social activity into your family's daily routine.
- Do allow enough time for free play, with outside games and lots of running around.
- Do combine physical activity and healthy eating behaviours.
- Do include a variety of activities so that kids won't get bored.
- Don't spend too much time in front of screens.
- Don't over exercise - short bouts of physical activity throughout the day are perfect.
- Don't go from 0 to 60km, it's okay to take it slow.
- Don't force your likes and dislikes on your kids.

Cardio ideas

The easiest way to ensure your kids have a healthy cardiovascular system is to just let them play.



Red light, orange light, green light

- Red light = stop, orange light = slow down, green light = go
- Get the kids standing in a line and facing the same direction
- Stand some distance away and call out the colours (with a short time lapse in-between) as they stop, walk and run accordingly
- If they perform the incorrect action, they need to get back to the starting line



Paper race

- Give each child a piece of paper and show them how to run with the paper by holding it to their chest
- After picking up speed, let it go so the air pressure holds it in place
- For older kids, have them run in circles to increase difficulty



Shuttle Run

- Set up 5 cones or objects in a line, 2m apart
- The child runs to cone one and brings it back to the start, then cone 2 and brings it back to the start, then cone 3 and so on

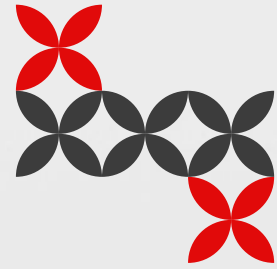


Hoopers

- Place as many hula hoops on the ground as the number of children.
- Children stand outside the hoops and on the command 'run/gallop/skip/hop', the children run/gallop/skip/hop around the area without touching anyone or the hoops
- On the command 'Hoopers', each child must find the nearest hoop to jump into

15 minutes of speed & agility

Dr Eileen Africa & Catherine Coupar





Speed & agility are important skills for both mental & physical development.

It's not about being the quickest or most agile, but rather about how your kids learn about and cultivate their abilities. After that, it's about how they apply them in day-to-day life from playing 'catchers' to their later development on the sports field.



Understanding speed & agility

Speed is the execution of a movement at a fast pace, using the whole body - **the ability to move quickly**. Agility is the spontaneous ability to change direction, while stopping, starting, accelerating, and slowing down. While you don't expect your 3-year-old to be able to run a Toddler Parkour course, the underlying benefits of developing better agility include improvements in the perceptual and decision-making processes, which form an important part of their development.

Bio-benefits

Speed and agility exercises promote development of the neuromuscular system (all the muscles in the body and the nerves which serve them) and enhance proprioception (the body's ability to sense movement, action, and location), balance and coordination.

They also **promote more explosive power, cardiovascular fitness, strength, and endurance**. All this comes with added benefits including weight loss, improved athletic ability and improved multi-directional movement.

Focus on fundamental movement skills

Improvements in agility come about as coordination and general motor control develop. The ability to change direction quickly develops naturally throughout childhood as kids master these skills and the focus for younger children should always be on FMS. As they get older and start participating in organised sports, versions of strength training and plyometrics - **explosive movements like sprinting, kicking or skipping** - will help them develop more agility.

To bring a bit of science to the party for a second, it's the repeated exposure to stimulus that results in faster response times and enhanced cognitive capacity, which in turn strengthens the existing synaptic pathways. In essence: the more speed and agility-developing exercises they do, the better they'll get at it.



Speed drills - crouching starts



Don't push it

Best practice begins with **understanding the ability of each child** individually and starting with simpler speed and agility-developing activities until they are ready to progress. Ideally, you should set up the activities in an open space, with a flat, stable surface, to minimise the risk of injury. Performing the movements in as controlled a manner as possible is also important, for the same reason.

Using a variety of equipment will make the activities more interesting and exciting for kids - as always, fun should lead the way, not repetitions or drills. The selection of movements is essential, too, to develop all the directional skills: **forwards, backwards and sideways.**

Speed drills - ladder drill:

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do look for a flat surface to perform the activities on (avoid very uneven surfaces).
- Do encourage children to perform these activities barefoot (no socks) if circumstances allow.
- Do ensure that there are no obstacles or obstructions in the activity area.
- Don't use any broken equipment.
- Do make the activities fun.
- Do stop regularly for water and rest breaks.
- Do start slow and with simpler activities.



Agility drills - single leg balance



Agility drills - helicopters

Speed and agility drills

It's not about being the quickest or most agile, but rather about how your kids learn about and cultivate their abilities.



Speed drill: crouching starts

- Begin in a 4-point stance (like a track sprinter) with both hands 30cm in front of the body and both feet on the floor
- Lean forward and propel the body forward and then go into a sprint



Speed drill: ladders

- Use a ladder for older kids and some chalk drawn blocks for the littler ones
- Jump with both feet together between blocks/rungs of the ladder, keeping the knees soft and land gently
- Increase the complexity of the drill for older kids by getting them to follow a pattern (i.e., jumping inside on one block and outside on the next)



Agility drill: Single leg balance

- Standing on 1 leg, reach out with the opposite hand and slowly touch the floor about 40cm in front of the supporting leg
- Repeat on the other leg and keep going

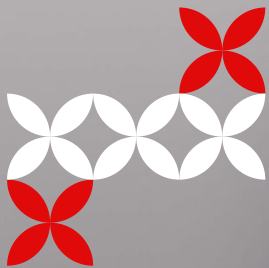
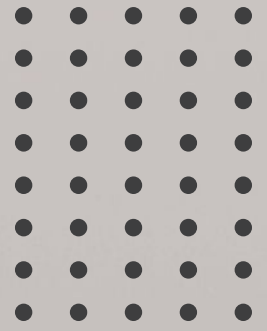


Agility drill: Helicopters

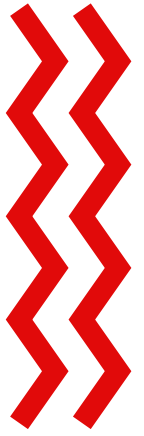
- Start in the squat position, with arms stretched out to the sides at shoulder height
- Then pretend you're a helicopter propeller by performing revolving squat jumps, jumping and landing at 90 degree angles

15 minutes of improving posture

Dr Eileen Africa



Developing a healthy posture is key for good physical health - throughout your child's life.



Good posture is essential across all ages, but it's particularly important for children who are at or near school-going age. Posture refers to your body's position, is connected to balance and can influence the development of Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS).

A forward head and rounded shoulder posture is often seen in everyday life, mostly because of bad habits. A bad posture is not just a matter of frequently slumping when you sit, over time it affects the way you sit, stand and move, and the deviation from the norm can even affect your breathing. Slumping the body can tire the muscles and affect a child's ability to concentrate, which can have a negative impact on their academic performance.



Start at the start

Since poor adult posture is formed in childhood, let's look at where it all begins.

When curled in the womb, an unborn baby's spine retains a 'C'-shaped curve. Once born, babies experience the effects of gravity and explore their new environment to test out their muscles and straighten their backs.

As children learn to sit and maintain head control, the weight of the head is brought over the center of gravity, which pulls their eyes up, so they can look forwards, clearly. As they learn to stand up and walk, children learn to bring the head over the center of gravity once more, allowing their frame to balance their body weight. Their legs develop by straightening out to help them carry their weight and the final

step in developing 'normal' posture is correct positioning of the head on the spine.

The spine's range of motion - backwards, forwards, sideways and twisting - is very complicated and works together to help the body maintain balance. These motions are controlled by the back muscles - the tension in these muscles help hold the spine in its correct position. That tension is countered, in turn, by the muscles in the front of the body. The posture is controlled by these counterbalances, which need to be developed to work in harmony to keep the posture correct.

All this means that telling kids to 'sit up straight' and keep their shoulders back isn't terribly effective, as poorly toned muscles will pull them back to their previous position, naturally.

Results of poor posture

Untreated incorrect posture negatively affects cardiorespiratory efficiency, lung capacity and can lead to lower back pain. It also has a negative effect on the metabolism and causes imbalances in the interaction between the muscles and the skeleton.

The way a child walks can cause a series of postural imbalances and when bone grows faster than muscle mass increases, the posture can be affected. Kids who are less physically active have lower muscle tone, which produces more imbalances in the body that the muscles struggle to correct.



Walk on even and uneven surfaces.

Correcting posture

The good news is that physical activity plays a significant role in supporting correct posture - let the kids play! Since it's all about muscle tone and endurance, simple games like balancing along a log, jumping around or mimicking the movements of animals are easy ways to help children develop strong muscles - and therefore, a healthy posture. There's no need for weights or equipment - just get them active and keep them moving.

As with all activity, performing these kinds of activities with your child offers a tremendous bonding opportunity - having Mom or Dad walk like a crab is fun for kids and gives them an example of how the movement should look. It also improves self-esteem and encourages them to experiment with and explore their own bodies.



DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do keep posture in mind when addressing stretching and mobility.
- Do remain consistent in promoting correct posture for overall physical strength.
- Do support their lower back, and promote regular stretching and movement!
- Don't allow kids to sit or walk incorrectly - instead call it out and correct.
- Don't forget good posture behaviour starts with mom or dad.



Alternating 'Superman' positions on a Yoga mat

Postural control

Long gone are the days of balancing a pile of books on your head while walking a straight line. Try these fun postural control activities.



18 months - 3 years

Walk on even and uneven surfaces



3 - 6 years

Chase and pop bubbles before they hit the floor



6 - 9 years

Lie face down on a Yoga mat, exhale as you lift arms, legs, chest and head off the floor to become superman. Hold for 5 seconds and exhale as you lower back down

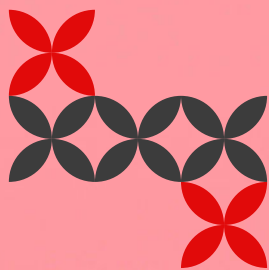


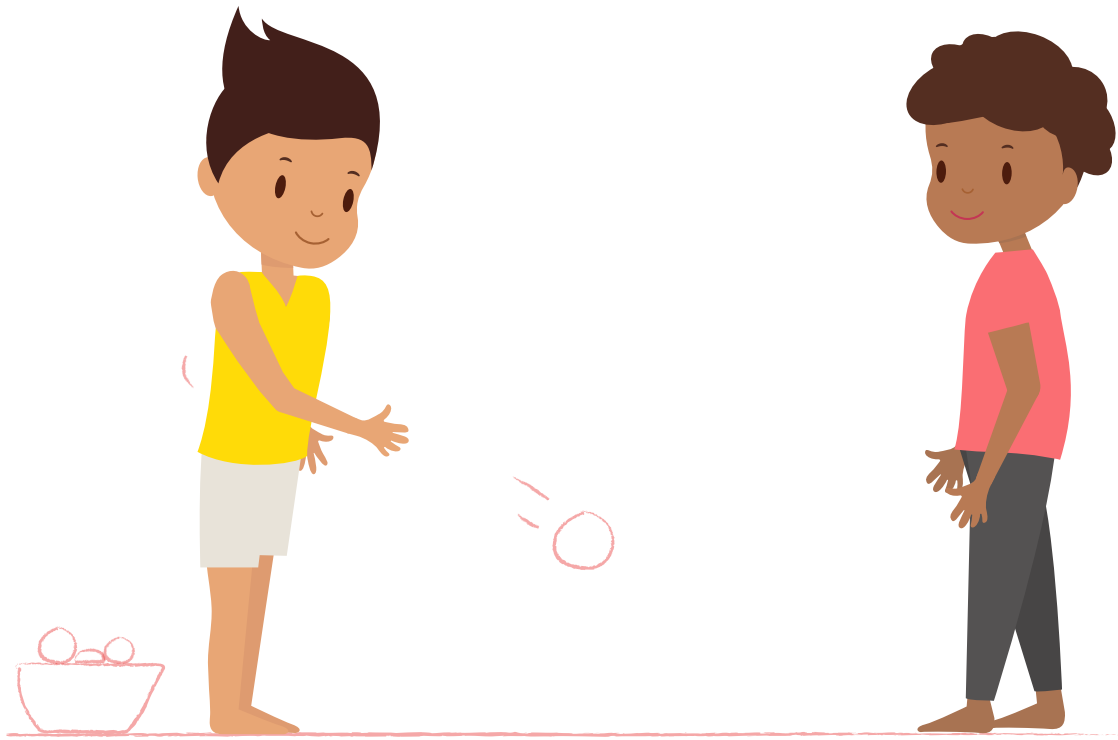
10 - 13 years

In a plank position, throw beanbags into a hula hoop a few meters away, using alternating hands

15 minutes of family playtime

Catherine Coupar & Ceri Hannan

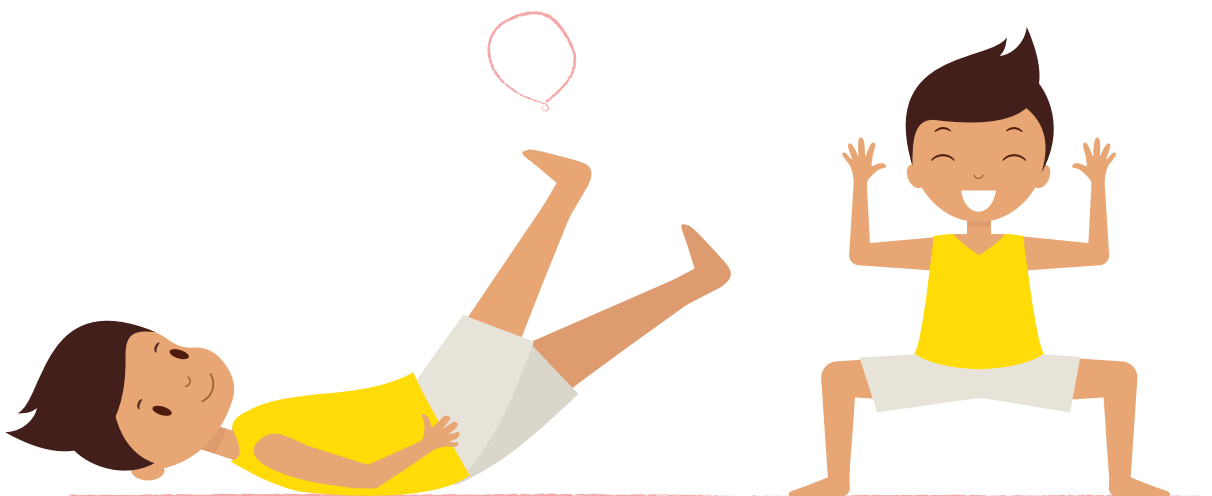




Active families are healthy families - physically, mentally & in terms of the bond between parents and their kids.

Getting active is important for everyone. Adults hit the gym, teenagers play sports, kids run helter-skelter around the playground and babies expend plenty of energy in learning to roll, crawl, walk and run.

Part of getting anyone to move is **focusing on the fun**. All you need to know is that playtime is exercise time - and both can be fun, especially if everyone joins in. Plus, keeping a balloon in the air for two minutes or pretending the floor is lava sounds like way more fun than going for a run.



Lay on your backs and try keep the balloon in the air by only using your feet.

Children repeat patterns played out by the parent, with their hands and arms.

Bigger benefits

Any kind of physical activity has obvious health benefits, but one of the most powerful ways to make it even more effective, is to do it together.

Kids learn by example - and having parents (not forgetting teachers and caregivers) set the example that physical activity is important, can help them understand the long-term benefits in their own lives.

When everyone joins in, the experience also develops relationships, improves communication, teaches lessons about competition and fairness, and improves the bonds between the unit.

Kids who communicate easily with their parents may perform better academically, exhibit fewer behavioural problems, and even experience better mental health. Family activities - with the benefit of positive reinforcement - **can promote self-confidence, adaptability, and resilience.**

Making these activities part of a routine helps kids to understand their importance because everyone in the family is involved. It provides time for families to come together, catch up and learn more about each other. It's also all part of consistently teaching kids about the benefits of getting active and what this does for their health, minds, and bodies. It's not a chore - it's an amazing opportunity to watch your children learn, grow, and develop behaviours which will serve them for the rest of their lives!



Taking time

There's no limit to the amount of time you should spend together, obviously - but working family activity time into the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity that kids should be getting on most days of the week, can help mix things up. Ideally, at least 2 of these sessions should be family focused.

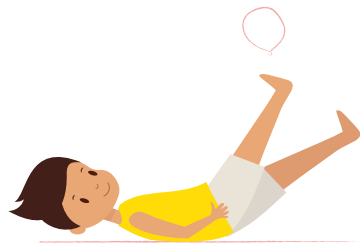


DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do make time for family activities regularly - every week.
- Do turn everyday activities into fun activities.
- Do look for ways to make the activities developmental and fun.
- Do be creative and mix things up regularly.
- Do ask kids what they feel like doing.
- Do it with them.
- Don't reward kids with screen time, since this is counter intuitive.
- Don't make activities a chore.

Super-quick activity ideas

You don't need much in the way of equipment or space to get the kids up and moving try these easy 5 minute activity games for strength, coordination and more.



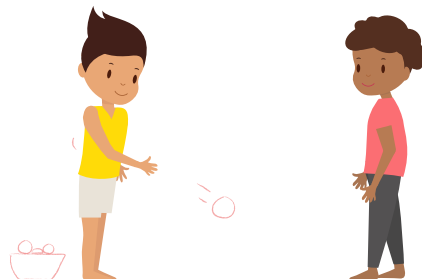
Balloon activity

- Lay on your backs and try keep the balloon in the air by only using your feet
- If the balloon touches the ground, everyone must do a quick exercise (like 5 push-ups) before starting again



30s

- Team up as a family and do exercises in sets of 30 repetitions, with everyone counting a rep towards the total
- If there are 3 of you doing push-ups for example, you'll each do a rep one after the next while you count to 30



Jumping & dodging

- Gather a basket of different sized balls/balled-up paper/rolled up socks
- One person stands a few metres in front of the other who will quickly roll/throw the balls along the ground towards the other person's feet as they dodge them, so they don't touch their feet

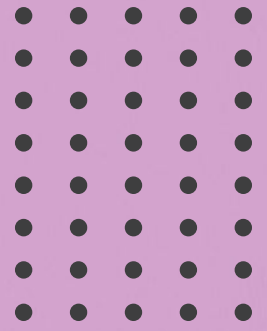


Quick Hands

- The "rock, paper, scissors" of motor planning, perform a sequence of actions with your hands and arms, your child will repeat the sequence back to you
- Use different sequences and speeds to suit their ability

15 minutes of everyday, everywhere fun

Catherine Coupar & Ceri Hannan



Whether it's bright & sunny or cool & rainy, it's easy to get your kids active & learning vital developmental skills, with indoor or outdoor games.

To paraphrase Mary Poppins, **'in every activity that must be done, there's an element of fun. You find the fun and, snap, the activity's a game'**. There's no reason you can't turn any kind of exercise into a fun activity for your child, which will instill as big a love for having fun as it will for being physically active.

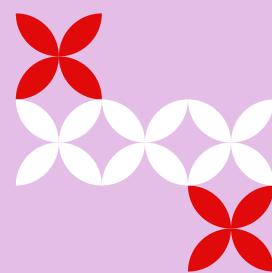
It's easy to create opportunities for fun using everyday household items - which means there's no excuse for not getting in the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity your kids need most days of the week to help them develop. Rainy days or cold weather can drive them indoors, but there are plenty of safe, indoor activities that'll get their heart rates up and their major muscle groups active.

No pressure

It's a mantra that recurs throughout this book, simply because it's true. Any activity you engage in with your child should be fun, without pressure. If they don't like the activity you propose, try another similar activity to keep the momentum going.

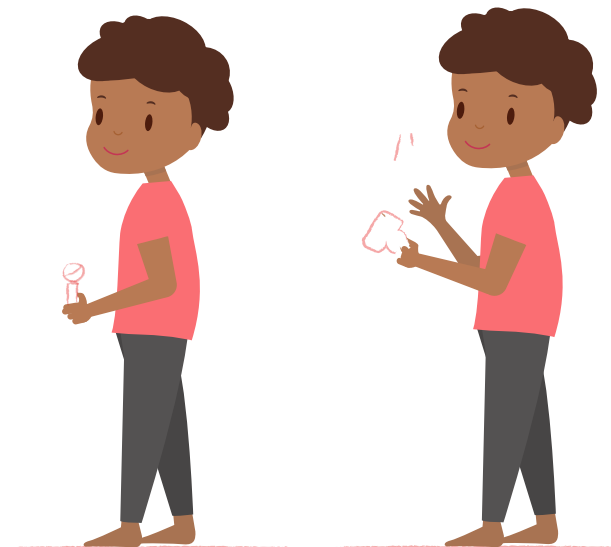
The reward for completing the activity should be the enjoyment - there's no point in rewarding them with sweet treats or screen time. That makes the activity reward-based, rather than linked to their performance - not quality of performance, but the act of simply performing the activity.

Once a child understands why being active is good for their body, they can start making conscious choices to get active and lay the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. **Healthy bodies = healthy minds and happy kids.**



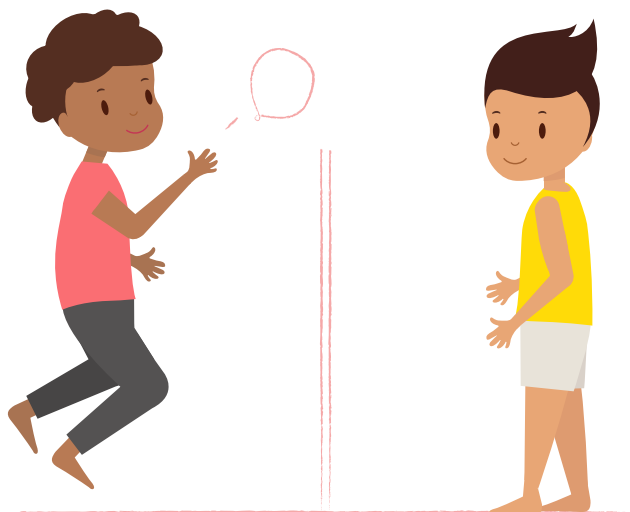
More than muscle

While the focus of any physical activity should be to activate the body's major muscle groups, there are plenty of additional developmental skills you can help foster. Throwing a ball or balloon and 'catching' it on an upturned toilet roll cardboard inner, for example, sees them chasing the object around the room but also helps them develop hand-eye coordination, visual tracking, and focus. It's easy to lose sight of just how many elements we must get to work in unison to complete a task like that - but practising bringing all these elements together is an essential part of a child's developmental process.



Indoor activities -
balance a ball on a toilet roll

Indoor activities -
catch in the cup



Outdoor activities -
beach ball volleyball

Aside from motor skills development, physical activity can also lead to improved cardiovascular fitness, strength, agility, and coordination; better balance, proprioception, and flexibility; improved mental health, mood and concentration; the development of social and communication skills, as well as better sleep.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do make sure that activities are fun and stimulating.
- Do make sure that the environment is clear and safe from hazards before starting the activities.
- Do make sure that any equipment used is safe and not broken.
- Don't make the activities a chore.
- Don't complicate activities for the younger age groups - simple and easy to follow is best.
- Do the activities with your kids - you can benefit from them, too!



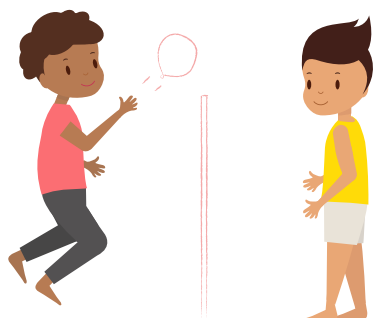
Moving inside and out

There are loads of ways to get kids moving indoors and outdoors. Here are a few suggestions if you're looking for a little inspo.



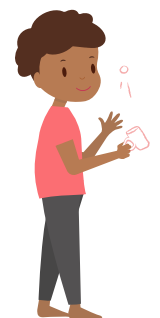
Indoor ice cream game

- Give each child a toilet roll, and a ball (or a balled-up piece of paper)
- Ask them to balance the ball on top of the toilet roll like an ice cream
- Challenge them to do relay races, walk through obstacle courses etc. without letting their "ice cream" fall off



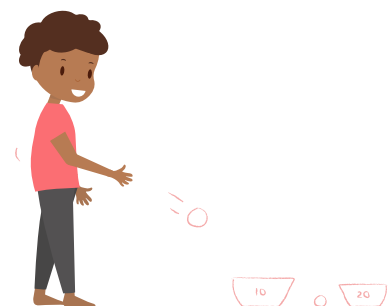
Outdoor beach ball volleyball

- You need some open space, a beach ball (or balloons) and a 3-5m piece of string
- Make your net by hanging the string horizontally a metre above the ground between 2 points
- Using fingertips, get the kids to hit the ball/balloon back and forth across the net
- When the ball/balloon touches the ground, the person on the other side scores a point



Indoor catch in the cup

- Grab a cup and a small ball/balled-up piece of paper
- Challenge your children to throw up the ball and catch it in the cup
- Keep a scoreboard to see who can get the most consecutive catches
- Make it more challenging by throwing up the ball higher or making the cup or ball smaller in size



Outdoor washing basket target practice

- Set up 2 boxes/washing baskets, one in front of the other
- Stick a piece of paper with a number in each one, 10 for the closest and 20 for the furthest
- Select balls of various sizes (from a ping pong ball to a basketball) and draw a line for them to stand behind
- By throwing the balls into the baskets, they score points to see who wins after a set number of throws

15 minutes of nutrition modelling

Kim Hofmann



‘You are what you eat’ - but your behaviour around food plays as much of a role in your child’s life, & your own, as what you put in your body.

Along with the idea that regular physical activity has massive emotional, health and fitness benefits for kids, **the concept of parental modelling is one that continues to crop up in helping kids lead healthier lives.**

Kids trust their parents because they’re the centre of their world. A child has a biological default towards trusting their parents from the second their eyes meet.

As much as that trust is biological and not earned, at the start, parents then have a responsibility to do what is right for their kids and nurture them into healthy, well-adjusted little people. This requires parents to set aside their own challenges and preconceptions to help give their kids the best possible chance - which is what every parent wants for their kids.

Children learn by mimicking the behaviour of those around them - particularly their parents - so it’s important to remember that they may pick up your hang-ups and misgivings as easily as they do your positive influences.

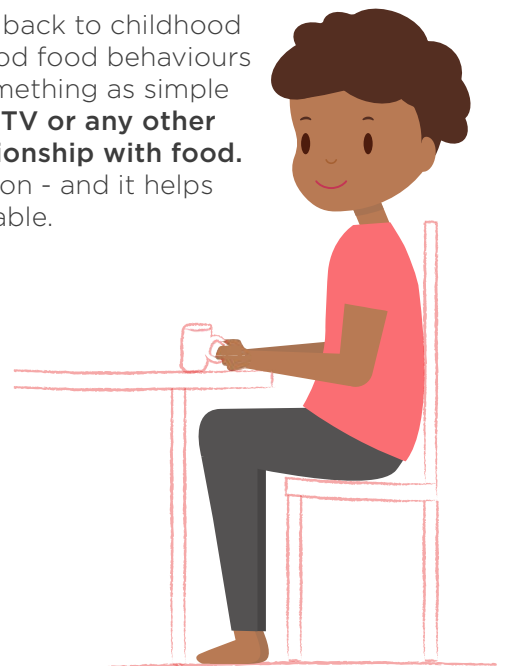
Good food behaviours

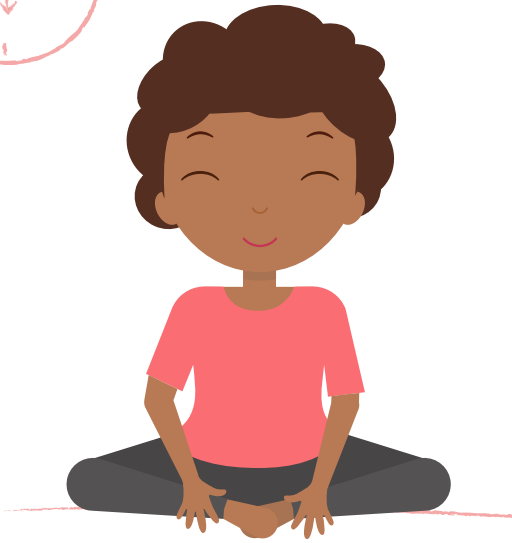
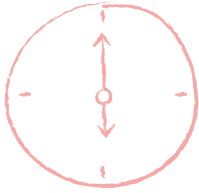
From a food perspective, modelling is particularly difficult to manage because everyone has their own challenges with food - be it allergies, preferences, a desire to lose weight or something else. If you want your child to have a healthy relationship with food, you need to have one yourself - which offers a great chance for self-reflection. If you’re constantly on a diet, that’s what your child sees. If you constantly express unhappiness about the way your body looks, they learn to be critical of their own bodies.

Complex relationships with food in adulthood can be traced back to childhood habits, in the overwhelming majority. Parents who model good food behaviours - how, when and what they eat - instil those in their kids. Something as simple as **sitting around a table to eat, rather than in front of the TV or any other screen can contribute towards developing a positive relationship with food.** It teaches kids that food is the star of mealtime - not a cartoon - and it helps develop socialising skills as the family interacts around the table.

Kids will also be more prone to eating what you eat when you share mealtimes. So, if you’re trying to get them to eat foods you aren’t particularly fond of, you’ll need to have at least a small amount yourself. This shows them that certain foods aren’t ‘weird’ or to be avoided.

When talking about food, the kind of modelling you need to do for your child is functional - explain that you’re eating something healthy now so that you will have energy to play with them.





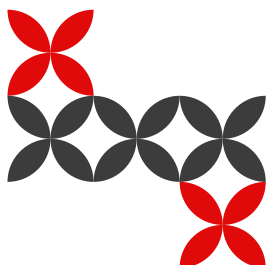
Routine is pivotal in childhood development - and mealtimes are no different. Setting up regular routines for meals and snacks is something that children need to learn how to do. Part of that routine - breakfast, snack, lunch, snack, dinner, and potentially another snack for older kids - is being able to enjoy an array of foods. Snack times are key, where it's essential to provide nutritious foods that can be seen as treat replacements for sweets and chocolates. That said, denying your kids the experience of sweets and chocolates can contribute to forming negative associations - **in other words, everything is okay, in moderation.**

Allergies & intolerances

Allergies or intolerances which may prevent you from eating certain foods offer a great learning experience for children. Generally, if someone in the family has a food allergy, that food won't be present in the home, so kids won't be exposed to it. **Have a conversation around it, in a positive light** - you can explain that if you eat that prawn, you'll get ill and may not be able to breathe, for example. That's not the fault of the prawn - it's something your body can't process, but that's not the case with everyone.

Where parents have intolerances to certain things like gluten or lactose, modelling food and kitchen behaviours can be outside of the norm. Many people cut out gluten or lactose for lifestyle reasons, while others - as in the case of coeliac disease where your immune system attacks your own tissue when gluten is consumed - have a genuine problem.

The highly specialised diets that people adopt as part of trends or for perceived lifestyle benefits are unnatural. Normalising foods and bringing things back to basics can often solve intolerance problems - many people who believe they are gluten intolerant have a mental block against it, or the real culprit is unhappy gut bacteria rather than the inability to process gluten. There are easy ways around these kinds of challenges, which can promote better relationships with more natural foods.





Picky eaters

If your child is a particularly fussy eater, you can help change their behaviours by modelling your own. For example, you can put on their plate what's on yours - including some things they may not want to eat - and share it with them. **Parents also need to let kids play with their food** - it's the way they explore the world and food is a big part of that. Let them feed themselves when they're old enough, and touch, feel and put it in their mouths to get a proper understanding of taste, texture, and smell.

Some parents try to keep their kids clean and don't encourage messy eating - this can contribute to them being more fussy at a later stage, since they associate food with a more clinical experience.

Body image

Adult body image is also drawn from childhood experience; as kids get older, they start to notice how their bodies are different to those of other kids around them. It's essential for parents to model good behaviour here, too - just as there are no 'good' or 'bad' foods, there is no 'good' or 'bad' body.

Our bodies are wondrous tools that help us navigate the world - and they should be celebrated.

Aside from influencing perceptions around body image, parents also project their own body image challenges onto their children. You may worry your child is putting on a bit of weight - which generally leads to the assumption that they need to 'diet'. Dieting doesn't mean the denial of foods, it's about changing eating habits and exercising, which should be seen as

part of a healthy lifestyle anyway, rather than a 'cure' for an imaginary ill.

In the pre-pubescent phase, we find that kids 'grow' into their weight - fluctuating up and down. You'll notice that your children's growth will be both horizontal and vertical at different times. That's part of a storage cycle where the body is preparing for growth and is perfectly natural. This natural process continues until puberty and there's no cause for alarm.

Kids are learning many things, but one thing they pick up very early on is noticing when they're hungry - and they'll let you know. Giving them nutritious options for meals and snacks when they're hungry is far better than feeding them lots of sugar or processed foods that affect their ability to understand hunger and 'feel full'.

The mouth craves the additives in processed food, not the stomach.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do keep conversations about nutrition and good nutrition behaviours open with your kids.
- Do make sure your kids understand why we eat, and the role of nutrition in growth and health.
- Do practice what you preach - kids are always watching.
- Don't force, but be firm within reason.
- Don't forget there are no 'good' or 'bad' foods, just behaviours.

Modelling behaviours

Setting a good example is key when it comes to nutrition, here are a few activities you can try.



Gather around the table for meals

- Avoid eating in front of the TV or having screens on the table
- This teaches kids that food is the star of mealtimes and helps to develop social skills through family interaction



Be positive about your own food journey

- If you're constantly on a diet or expressing unhappiness with the way you look your kids will learn to be critical about their own bodies
- Stay positive about your relationship with food and your body to set a great example



It takes all types

- Kids are more prone to eat what you're eating. If you don't like certain foods, chances are neither will they
- Have a small amount of everything to encourage them to try new things and show them that certain foods aren't to be avoided



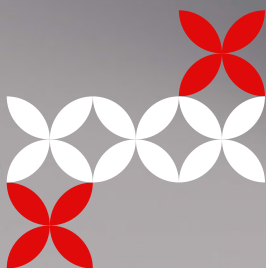
Establish set routines

- Set up regular routines for meals and snacks
- Helps them know what to expect, when, and so that they also learn how to set their own routines

15 minutes of stretches & mobility



Dr Eileen Africa & Ceri Hannan



Stretching is as important as brushing teeth - all kids should be doing it.



Exercises that promote stretching & mobility & engaging with various unused muscle groups, can positively impact your child's flexibility & help minimise the risk of injuries as they progress through different levels & intensities of exercise.

Kids are naturally active and love to move and there is no denying that physical activity presents many benefits. Children learn a lot about their bodies and physical capabilities through experience and engaging in physical activities. Along with strength and endurance, **flexibility is one of the fundamental components of physical fitness - no matter your age.**

Informal guidance, instruction and a focus on introducing kids to fun elements that allow them to explore how their bodies move and what they're capable of means that they'll also gain an understanding of what is safe for them to do.

Flexibility comes naturally for little ones and it might seem easy, however it becomes more difficult the older they get. Tweens and teens' muscles may be tight so we need to make sure that stretches are included in their daily activities.



Mobility magic

Perhaps asking your child to perform a pretzel-like full body Yoga pose or do a quadricep stretch is a recipe for disaster, but there are ways to start small and build the body up to a state of flex.

Animal poses are a great way to inspire stretches and boost mobility in young kids. Having them mimic animal movements - crawling like a leopard, jumping like a horse, stretching to be as tall as a giraffe - keeps things fun, while working on fundamental and perceptual movement skills.

Developing your own series of animal poses for them to run through for at least 10 minutes can be loads of fun - especially if you choose animals they have a particular fondness for, or introduce them to animals they may not have heard of before. It's all about learning through movement and working these kinds of activity into unstructured play, to reach the minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day that every child needs.

There are two types of stretches - dynamic and static:

Dynamic stretching involves movement and is repetitive, whereas static stretching involves holding a particular position for a few seconds. Basic stretching exercises can improve flexibility which allows the muscles and joints to move easily through their full range of motion.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do demonstrate and practice together.
- Do promote regular stretching and a range of poses.
- Don't make stretch and mobility sessions too long or overly complex.
- Don't hold stretches for longer than 15 - 20 seconds.

Playful poses

For the littles, mimicking animal movements is a fun way to introduce stretches and mobility work.



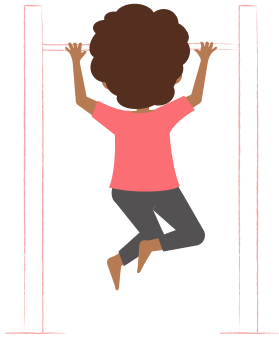
18 months - 3 years

Pretend you're a giraffe and stand on your tippy toes



18 months - 3 years

Lay on the floor and make snow angels



3 - 6 years

Monkey it up on the monkey bars (younger kids will need assistance)



3 - 6 years

Lie on the floor like a snake with your head lifted off the ground, then push up into a downward dog



6 - 9 years

On your back, transfer a beanbag from your feet to your hands and then above your head



6 - 9 years

On all fours, curl your head to look at your tummy like a cat and then stretch back up so your back is flat and raise your head and moo like a cow



10 - 13 years

In a lunge, put one hand on the floor and raise the other above your head - keep looking at the raised hand before changing sides

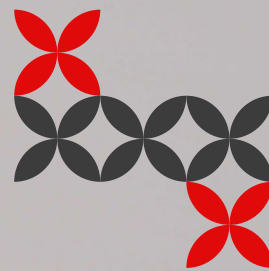


10 - 13 years

Sit like a butterfly and place your right ear on your right shoulder, then do the same on the left

15 minutes of breathing

Joëlle Sleetbos & Janna Kretzmar



Impressing the importance & power of mindful breathing on kids from a young age can help them manage stress & anxiety with a tool they'll have for life.

The breath, when used consciously, can serve as a useful tool and be a real gift in our day-to-day life. It is a handy tool as we have our breath with us all the time and cannot accidentally forget it at home. In Yoga we refer to the practice of focusing on your breath as “pranayama” where “prana” means life force and “yama” means to practice or gain control.

It's an extremely powerful tool that, if used correctly, can have a calming and connecting effect on mind and body. It can be harnessed to control anxiety, still thoughts and calm the central nervous system. All it takes is a bit of practice.

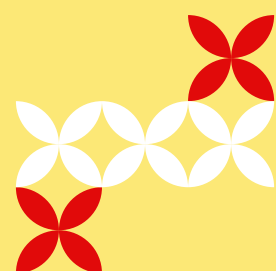
We breathe all day long, but practising breathing techniques is about breathing more consciously and paying attention to its effect on your being. It allows you to connect, check in and observe yourself and helps with concentration and focus. A morning breathing sequence can help you wake up and a night-time calming sequence can quiet the mind before bed.

Breathing for kids

It all sounds helpful, but as a parent of a younger child, you're probably wondering how the practice can be harnessed for them. While traditionally breathing practices aren't taught to kids younger than 5, you can absolutely model it for them in your own behaviour and show them how you use your breathing to help you connect your mind and body in different ways.



In older kids - generally of school-going age who sadly start to experience stress because of busy schedules and developing emotions - it can be a powerful tool to help them wherever they are and whenever they need it. It's especially helpful when preparing for an exam, helping them manage anger or nervousness.





Breathing techniques

With breathing comes awareness - and the simplest way to calm a child is to have them breathe out slower than they breathe in.

Breathing in for 4 - 6 seconds and then out for 6 - 8 seconds, repeatedly, is a proven way of promoting and inducing calm. Your kids will start to understand how breathing can help them when you, as their parent, also practise mindful breathing and demonstrate the power of a slow and steady inhale and exhale.

Start to introduce it to them by having them take 3 deep breaths at a time, in through the nose and out through the mouth, for a short time.

You can introduce breath holds to kids older than 9 - pausing between breathing in and out again - but avoid breath-holds breathing for longer than 4-5 minutes at a time, by which time the conscious breathing will likely have had the desired effect, anyway.

Conscious breathing is also a great way of introducing kids to meditation and mindfulness since the techniques are less abstract than outright meditation and can be a more fun way to understand the power of stillness. As much as it has obvious benefits for you as a parent, it also provides a valuable bonding exercise for you and your kids and is a beautiful way of spending quality, focused one-on-one time with them.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do practice breathing techniques together as a family.
- Do explain the role that breathing plays on managing stress and anxiety.
- Don't try too many tools at once - allow your little one to understand and feel the benefits bit by bit.
- Don't forget that this chapter is all about practice, practice, practice.



Let's breathe

Breathing correctly helps us bring oxygen to our bodies and relax and focus our minds. While the littles may not always be able to follow the instructions, modelling the breathing exercises with them is beneficial.



Yoga breathing:

- Hold 1 hand on your heart and the other hand on your belly
- Breathe in for 3, hold for 1, out for 4
- Complete 3 rounds



Cake breath:

- Take a deep breath in through the nose
- Followed by a steady breath out through the mouth
- As if blowing out candles on a giant cake



Lion breath:

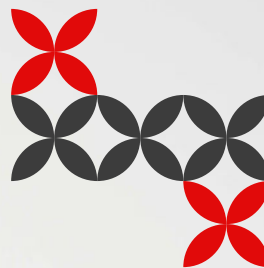
- Kneel and sit on the heels with eyes closed
- Breathe in and tighten all your muscles, stretch out your arms and focus your eyes on a spot between your eyebrows
- On the exhale, push out your tongue make an 'Aaaahhh' sound



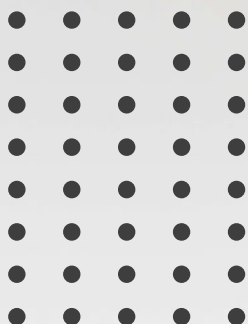
Humming bee:

- Inhale normally through the nose
- Make a humming sound as you breathe out

15 minutes of meditation & relaxation

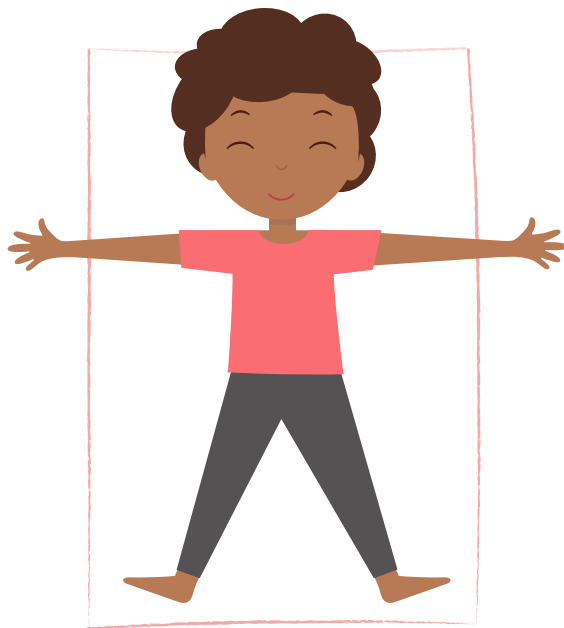


Joëlle Sleebos & Janna Kretzmar



Even before the world turned on its head in 2020, mental health challenges among young people were on the rise, globally. The fast pace of modern life, continuous temptation of screens and very little time left to connect with parents, siblings and friends were all taking their toll on our kids - and then COVID-19 arrived, and we were all locked down for months at a time.

Instead of connecting us, that time became one of uncertainty and new challenges as parents adapted to working from home and kids of school-going age to learning virtually - with a limited number of outlets for the pressures of a new world. Crucially, kids also did far less physical activity and were deprived of the connections forged with friends and family outside of their households.



18 months to 3 years
Sleepy starfish



3 to 9 years
Guided relaxation - to teach kids how to become aware of their bodies



Awareness & focus

Meditation allows us to broaden what we call the container of our awareness. The practice can assist us in connecting more to ourselves, others and the present moment. It's common to dwell on negative thoughts and emotions linked to the challenges of the past or uncertainty about the future. Meditation offers us an opportunity to focus and offers ways - like breathing - to become the observer of our bodies, minds and emotions.

Physically, when you allow yourself to be still and start to soften and deepen the breath, it has a calming effect on

the whole body and mind. In kids, meditation makes body awareness a less abstract concept as they focus on becoming aware of different body parts, how each of them feels and how to relax each of them and explore their sensory world.

Regular meditation can form part of a supportive intervention to help kids with mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression and ADHD. The benefits of just a few minutes per day extend far beyond what you observe in the moment, as a new set of tools is being developed which can serve kids in the course of their day-to-day life.



Benefits for body & mind

Meditation and relaxation have been shown to have a positive effect on focus, self-esteem, emotional regulation, sleep quality and patterns, regulation of behaviour, and self-awareness. It develops a better capacity to deal with and manage stress and improves resilience - something both kids and parents could do with. It empowers children because, once they learn that it's a tool to use when they're anxious, afraid or angry or just as part of a daily routine to centre them, they can practise it anywhere, anytime. **As a daily practice, it is an opportunity for them to unplug and just BE** - to slow down, to notice, breathe deeply, clear their minds, and connect.

Teachers who participate in **EarthChild Project's** programs have noted how the academic performance and attention span of their learners improves if the lesson directly follows a Yoga session. South African kids face varied challenges depending on their socio-economic background and in certain instances carry high levels of stress, trauma and fear, which makes it very difficult to learn and focus when they're in that state. When their body feels calmer, they're more able to focus and learn. Yoga, meditation and relaxation can help them focus better, improving their ability to take in information, concentrate on the task at hand and sleep better, which in turn links to improved concentration, mood and performance.

When to meditate

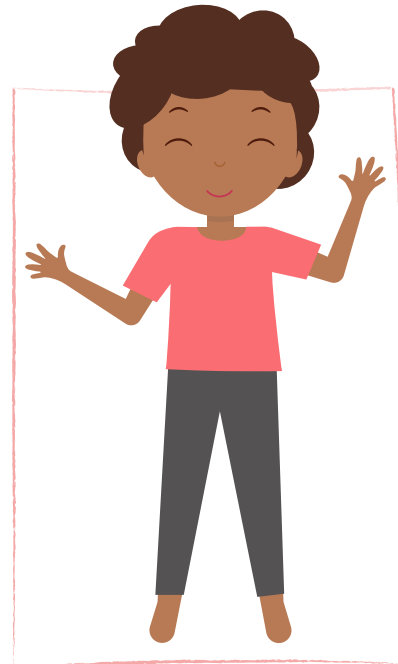
Kids under the age of 5 tend to find it easier to live in the moment and generally display limited anxiety. **The reason we practice meditation and relaxation is to become more present and in touch with our bodies, minds, and emotions** - and kids aged between 18 months and 4 or 5 years live in that state more naturally. As they get a little older and start school, more stressors arrive, which can be a good time to institute meditation and relaxation practice. Kids may not entirely understand the concept of meditation, but they will understand that when they do it, it makes them feel better.

Meditation for kids

A meditation practice for kids will be shorter and different to that of an adult practice. It is helpful to remove distractions, set up a safe, calm environment and guide the child through the meditation. The use of stories, visualisations, repetition and music could be helpful to support a child's meditation practice.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do promote quiet, **meditative relaxation** as a family.
- Do discuss stress and anxiety and the need for meditation and relaxation with your kids.
- Do explain mindfulness and being present to your little one.
- Don't attempt long periods of meditation with young ones.
- Don't be too prescriptive with mediation and 'still' time.

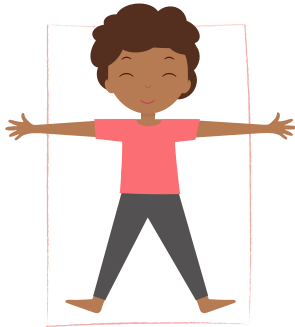


10 to 13 years

Light bath meditation - to teach visualisation as a tool to let go of negative or anxious feelings

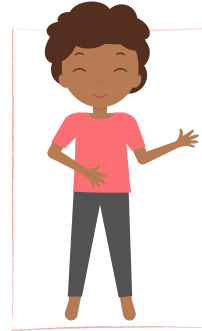
Meditation techniques to calm young minds

It's not always easy to get our kids to sit still and breath, but the benefits to their mental and physical health are plentiful.



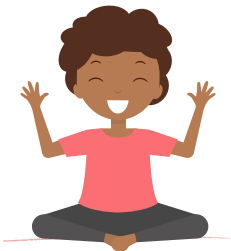
18 months - 3 years

Lie down on the floor with your child and tell them to imagine they are a sleepy starfish by stretching as wide as they can



18 months - 3 years

Lie on your back with your child, put a hand on each other's tummies and take slow, deep breaths to feel your tummies rising and falling together



3 - 9 years

Seated closed-eyed next to your child, imagine you have a balloon in your tummy that you inflate as you breathe in and deflate as you breathe out



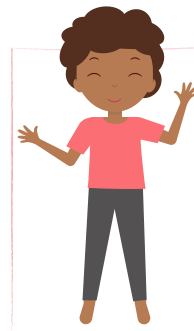
3 - 9 years

Get comfy, close your eyes and reach for your right foot, grab your toes, squeeze and take 2 deep breaths before changing feet



10 - 13 years

Ask your child to close their eyes, for 5 counts then exhale before passing a fragrant object like a flower or candle to smell and describe

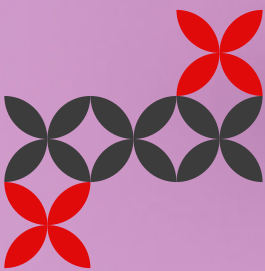


10 - 13 years

On their back with closed eyes, ask your child to visualise a warm light which is spreading over the areas that feel tense as they breathe in and out

15 minutes of gut health

Kim Hofmann & Catherine Coupar



Getting enough exercise & maintaining a healthy gut both go a long way towards promoting positive mental health in children.

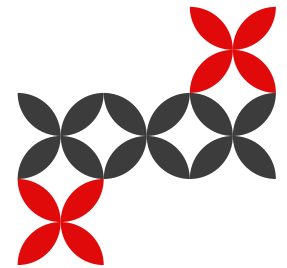
Today, more than ever, we are aware of the significant influence of physical activity on overall health and wellness - particularly mental health. Getting kids physically active as part of free or structured play, games, sports, Physical Education, and organised exercise for at least 60 minutes per day has almost as big an impact on mental health as it does on physical health.

Eating well is also crucial, as **the gut talks to the brain** - and if adults or kids aren't eating properly to keep the gut bacteria happy, we are far more likely to develop emotional and psychological problems like anxiety and depression.

The psychological is as important as the physical

It's no secret that physical activity has huge developmental benefits for kids, as well as helps them feel relaxed and happier through the endorphins and serotonin. This is what gives kids a feeling of happiness and reduces overall stress. In addition, a tremendous benefit of exercise for kids is an improvement in sleep quality and patterns.

Exercise minimises the psychological effects of stress on sleep and prevents the disruption of children's built-in circadian rhythm. Kids who are more active spend less time in front of screens, which means less exposure to blue light that has been found to disrupt sleep. When kids get enough sleep, they are less stressed and experience less mood swings, which contributes to their overall psychological health.



The second brain

The gut can play as important a role in mental health and wellbeing as physical activity. When we, or our kids, get stressed or anxious, the gut moves far more and intense emotion can also lead to looser bowels - or the complete opposite.

The connection between the gut and the brain in your child is fuelled by their microbiome - all the probiotics living in the gut and large intestine. It's the microbiome that helps absorb key vitamins and over 30 neurotransmitters, including serotonin. The microbiome also helps regulate the immune system and hormones. [Research at Ohio State University](#) found that gut bacteria diversity directly impacts a toddler's temperament.



Feed the gut - feed the brain

It's important, then, to always look after the volume and diversity of gut bacteria. It's easy to pop a supplement, but the effects are nowhere near as long-lasting as developing and maintaining a proper diet that feeds and diversifies the gut bacteria. Things like live-culture yoghurt, fermented vegetables like pickles and sauerkraut, kefir, and tempeh (a high protein meat substitute made from fermented soya beans) are wonderful foods to expand the microbiome.

Fibre also feeds the gut bacteria - and it's important to get a good mix of the different kinds of fibre,

to do so efficiently. Insoluble fibre like whole grains, fruit and veg - especially the skins - helps to soften the stools and promote regular bowel movements. Soluble fibre slows the movement of the food through the gut, helping you feel fuller for longer and can be boosted by the flesh of fruit and vegetables, oats, barley, and legumes. Prebiotics are another type of fibre that nourishes the gut bacteria - specifically apples, oats, barley, onion and flaxseed. Fluids are essential - whether water, milk, formula or diluted fruit juice - in helping the bowels process and move the food through.

It's also important that kids aren't overfed. A lot of parents worry that their kids are not eating enough and

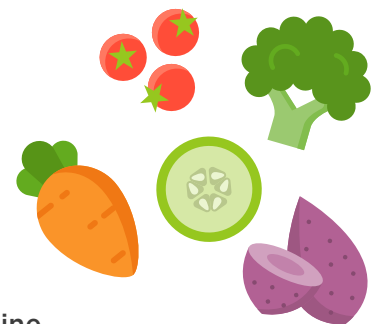


tend to feed them too much. Your child will not starve. They have a natural understanding of their bodies and know when they're hungry and when to stop eating. to allow it to do what it needs to, so that the gut is at its healthiest. You can certainly structure your child's 'eating day' in terms of breakfast-snack-lunch-snack-dinner and how those meals are eaten - ideally around the table as a family for the main ones. Provide your kids with a balanced plate and encourage them to eat from it.

Overeating affects the gut, overwhelming the bacteria and reducing their effectiveness - which can lead to challenges like anxiety and depression.

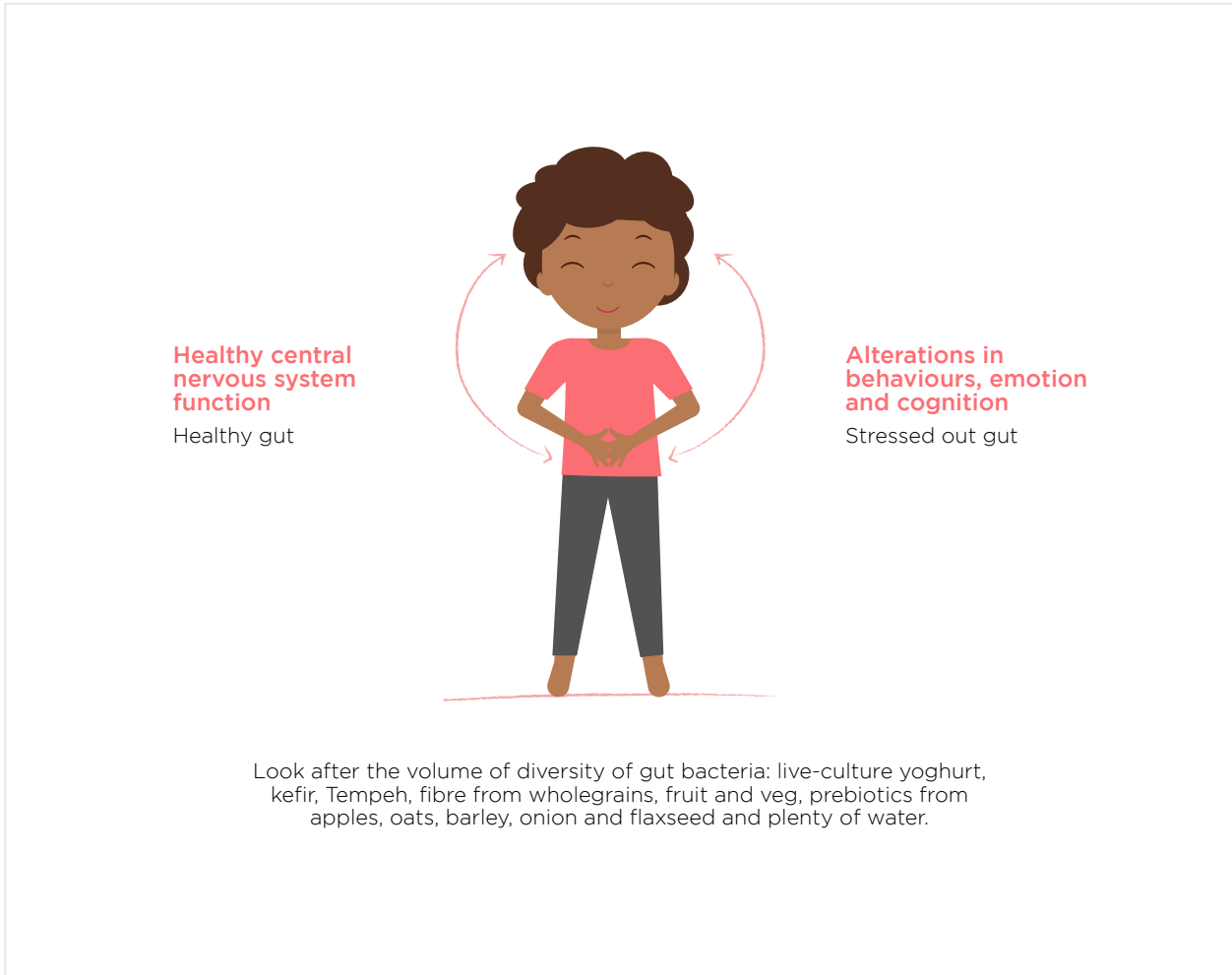
DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do remember your kids gut health impacts their entire body and overall health.**
- **Do maintain a healthy, balanced diet and ensure good bacteria forms part of this.**
- **Don't forget that the benefits of a good, balanced diet far outweigh the impact of a supplement on gut health.**
- **Don't allow for overeating, instead pacing out meals and structure a more frequent eating routine.**



The gut-brain connection

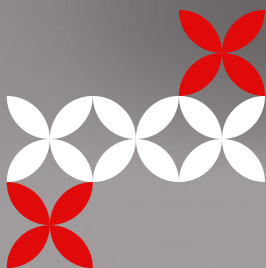
Physical activity and the gut play an important role in mental health and wellbeing. The gut-brain connection is largely driven by the collection of probiotic bacteria enzymes living in the gut and large intestine.





15 minutes of body insights

Dr Phathokuhle Zondi & Dr Adrian Rotunno



The definition of a healthy body image is when you feel comfortable in your own skin, **no matter your shape or form**, or how it compares to the rest of society. A healthy body image makes you feel good about yourself & comfortable with how you look. It can also give insight into how your body grows, moves & ultimately what you can do with it.

In kids, a positive body image is also key in helping develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and an innate sense of security. If those aspects aren't nurtured, a negative body image can lead to numerous psychological and physical challenges such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and obesity. Any of these health issues can change the trajectory of a young life.

For this reason, it is critical to help foster a positive body image from a young age, in both subtle and overt ways. In their first year, kids are dependent on their guardians for their basic needs, responding to stimuli instinctively and with no real understanding of their body. As they grow and learn to crawl, walk and

An important building block of self-acceptance is self-awareness. Teach your child about their different body parts, their different functions and inner workings. Teach them that every single body is different and that different body types, shapes and sizes are what make us unique and special. You can help your child develop a true appreciation of the human body - an incredible machine that accomplishes so much for all who respect it!



then run, they start to discover their physicality. Encouraging young kids to be active, to jump, hop, skip, and play gives them early confidence in their physical ability. When they start exploring with their senses - hearing different sounds, tasting a variety of flavours, seeing new sights, touching different textures - they become better attuned and responsive to their bodies. Awareness of body image can change depending on a child's stage of development, from baby to toddler, through pre-teen and teen - when their bodies change most drastically - and, as such, **positive image needs constant reinforcement.**



Social media & body image

One of the most significant external influences of body image is social media. Social media platforms present an image of a perfect life, lived by perfect people. As we scroll through over-filtered images, we invariably compare ourselves to unrealistic representations, idealised body types and image-crafted lives, which often negatively affects body image. **As parents, we can influence a young child's exposure and response to social media.** Limiting screen time and excessive social media use is important to protect the developing child. We can also counter some of the negativity of social media by being intentional in how we cultivate a positive body image from a young age. Creating awareness of bodily independence, ownership, and worth, while encouraging kids to respect and be proud of their body empowers them from an early age. Furthermore, encouraging physical activity and practising positive affirmation when your kids are active builds confidence in physical form. These cumulative actions help in creating a level of self-assurance within kids that may lessen the risk of them falling prey to insecurities caused by external pressures. In a world inundated by social media where they're potentially open to inappropriate contact with people, it's crucial that we help them understand that their body is their own, and that they can decide what to do with it and with whom to share it.

Each to their own

As you nurture your child's body image, you need to pay attention to their feelings about how they perceive the way they 'measure up' against their peers. It's important to help them understand that their peers may be better at some things, while they may be better at others. **With the insight that each body is not the same, comes the understanding that abilities will also be different.** Some skills or abilities will come with time, others will come with practice - and some they will never develop, despite any amount of practice. Kids need to understand that this is okay. Help them take pride in participating in other activities and developing a variety of skills. Reinforcing that participation in sport is more important than performance and reminding them that some things can be done for fun rather than to compete, will give them the confidence to explore. Not everyone will be a world-class sportsperson - but each body has the capacity for individual brilliance.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do talk openly about body image and self-acceptance.
- Do promote an understanding and exploration of the body.
- Don't create the idea that any body type is the wrong body type.
- Don't allow access to negative content through social media.
- Don't forget to have open conversations about individual capabilities and skills.



Body insights

There's constant transition happening in your child's body, here are some tips per age group.



18 months - 3 years

Babies and toddlers are naturally happy with their bodies because they have no concept of body image yet.

- Harness their natural playfulness
- Constantly smile and praise them
- Allow play and exploration



4 - 7 years

Kids start becoming more aware of their bodies and the differences between themselves and their peers.

- Engage with them about their bodies
- Promote healthy coping skills and an understanding of winning and losing
- Model positive behaviour



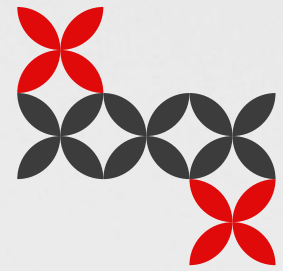
8 - 13 years


Children in this age group experience the biggest changes in body image and body positivity is important.

- Encourage exploration of different activities
- Focus on sleep hygiene and maintaining a healthy relationship with food
- Lead by example by being active and healthy

15 minutes of nutrition

Kim Hofmann & Arthur Ramoroka





Forming a healthy relationship with food & understanding what different foods do for them are essential to your child's development & invaluable later in life.

The golden thread, across life stages for your child, is to set them up for a lifetime of good health by teaching them the importance of a healthy diet and helping them develop a positive relationship with food.

Over 13% of kids in South Africa are overweight or obese - and that percentage is rising. It took a particularly steep climb under lockdown, where snacking increased and physical activity declined. Being overweight puts kids at a higher risk of developing metabolic, cardiovascular, orthopaedic, neurological, hepatic (liver), pulmonary, and renal disorders.

Modelling good food behaviours

Since children soak up information from the world around them, it's vital that parents inspire healthy eating habits by modelling the desired behaviour. If you have a balanced approach to your lifestyle in terms of work, play, physical activity and eating well, your kids will likely follow suit.

Developing healthy behaviours across the board, at a young age, is essential. From 12 to 24 months are very important formative years, followed by the next phase which is up to age 5. This next phase offers a critical window of opportunity to set healthy behaviours and attitudes, starting kids on a healthy path at a young age and educating them around the importance of food, nutrition, physical activity, and living well is key

to helping them grow into healthy adults. Involving them in choices when grocery shopping, cooking with them, and **helping them fall in love with healthy food** is key to kids developing a healthy relationship with nutrition.

There's no 'good' & 'bad' food

One of the keys to helping your kids develop a healthy relationship with food and nutrition is to practise 'food neutrality'. It's important to not classify food into 'good' and 'bad' categories - even 'healthy' vs. 'unhealthy' can be problematic. We need to focus on talking about the elements in food that bring health - saying 'this food will make you strong' or 'give you lots of energy' or 'help you to see well' etc. Also important is not to speak badly about foods - treats are not bad or unhealthy. They may not bring much nutrition to the body, but they bring a lot of joy to the mouth, which is an important part of nutrition too.

There's a time and a place for all kinds of food, particularly in terms of helping your kids explore new foods. If your child asks for a sweet treat at breakfast, for example, the conversation shouldn't centre around denying them a sweet, but rather discussing that it's not a good idea. Focus on the fact that it won't give them good energy for the morning or talk about finding a substitute that's better for them - fruit or fruit yoghurt, for example.



Intuitive eating

Intuitive eating and portion control are essential concepts to practice when considering your child's meals. Sometimes we eat because of emotions we're experiencing. We may be bored, or thirst may be manifesting as hunger. And, of course, our kids see that and learn from it.

Intuitive eating means eating when you are hungry and having what you want, in a quantity that satiates you.

Taking time to enjoy it is important so that satiety or that feeling of 'fullness' can be experienced at the correct time. For kids that means smaller, more frequent meals whenever they're hungry as their stomachs are tiny. Understand that your growing child's stomach is generally the size of their fist - so loading up their plate and then forcing them to finish all their food is likely going to make them uncomfortable, which is a feeling they will then associate with eating.

This also causes them to stop listening to satiety, in which case they start eating more than they need to. When we eat extremely nutritious foods, we are more easily satisfied, and the hunger and satiety cues are more accurate. With less nutritious foods, these signals get distorted as the blood sugar levels are not kept stable and the nutrition status of the child decreases - causing them to crave more food, and the cravings are unfortunately for the

DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do involve them in meal time prep.**
- **Do let them experiment with different food types as they grow older.**
- **Do sit together and enjoy meal time as a family as much as possible.**
- **Don't skip meal times and change routine too often.**
- **Don't try enforce large set meal times - instead practice intuitive eating more frequently.**

DID YOU KNOW

Lots of parents don't want their kids to make a mess or get their hands or faces dirty when eating - but that's actually an essential, particularly before the age of 2. Your child will explore different types of food not only in terms of how it tastes, but also how it looks, smells and feels.

less nutritious foods. Rather feed them smaller meals more frequently when they're younger (aged 1 to 6) and teach them about good eating patterns - the importance of breakfast before school, for example - as they get older (aged 6 to 13).

Sitting down as a family at the dinner table, without distractions, can also improve relationships between family members as much as it does your kids' relationship with food. They learn important socialisation, conversation, and sharing lessons during family mealtimes, so make the most of the opportunity.

Taste exploration is key, particularly with younger kids. By encouraging them to try a variety of foods from different categories and exposing them to different flavours and textures, you can add some excitement to mealtimes. Parents often forgo spices and herbs in food - but we use them to make our own food tastier and more interesting, so it's important to do the same for your kids.



Eating by age group

A look at the daily serving size of various food groups by age.



18 months - 3 years

Kids have high nutrient needs when compared to the amount of food they can eat, so it's vital they eat nutritious meals and nutrient-dense snacks in between.

- Fruit & veg: at least 2 servings
- Grains: 3 servings
- Dairy: 2 servings
- Meat/meat alternatives: 1 serving
- Good quality, healthy fats: use sparingly



4 - 7 years

Pre-schoolers need plenty of energy and nutrients. They start eating for pleasure around this age, so it's important to teach them about eating slowly and mindfully.

- Fruit & veg: 3 servings of veg, 2 of fruit
- Grains: 4 servings
- Dairy: 2 servings
- Meat/meat alternatives: 1 serving
- Good quality, healthy fats: use sparingly



8 - 13 years

Kids at this age tend to be very active, especially if they participate in team sports. Fuel their bodies and minds with the right kind of energy, so they're set-up for their day.

- Fruit & veg: 4 servings of veg, 2 of fruit
- Grains: 5 servings
- Dairy: 3-4 servings
- Meat/meat alternatives: 2 servings
- Good quality, healthy fats: use sparingly

Fruit & veg: 1 serving = 1/2 cup

Grains: 1 serving = 1/2 cup starch/starchy vegetables/legumes
or 1 slice of brown/high-fibre bread

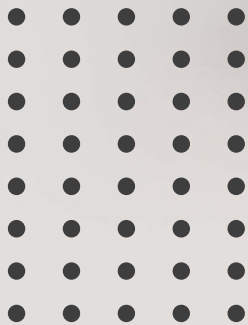
Dairy: 1 serving = 1 cup (250ml) of milk or 175ml of yoghurt

Meat & meat alternatives: 1 serving = 90g

15 minutes of executive function



Dr Eileen Africa & Catherine Coupar



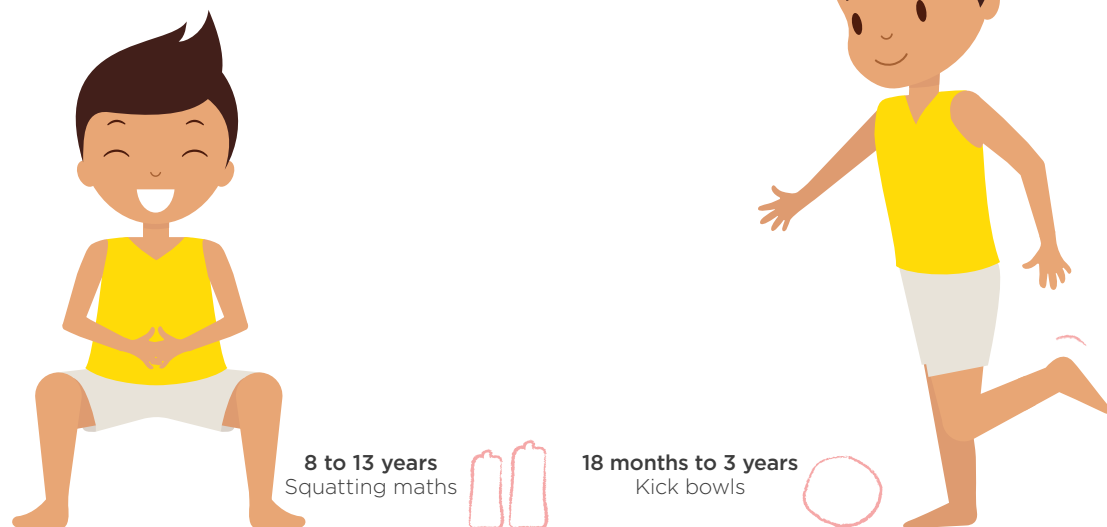


Healthy levels of physical activity can improve executive function in kids, which is the cornerstone of holistic development of kids & promotion of lifelong physically active lifestyles & behaviours!

The mental processes that enable humans to plan, focus, remember instructions and keep multiple tasks going successfully and simultaneously, are known as executive function. In kids, executive function is critical for learning, behaviour, and overall development, including developing the ability to make better choices.

Executive function

Executive function and self-regulation skills depend on 3 foundational components: working memory; mental flexibility; and self-control, which are all connected by common underlying processes.



Working memory is responsible for our ability to retain, categorise and work with information over short periods of time. Mental flexibility helps us to sustain change in attention, according to the demands on our time and also speaks to our ability to apply different rules to specific settings. Self-control helps us set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses.

Kids aren't born with these skills that's why it's important to nurture and develop executive function and this is dependent on the type and quality of experiences kids have during childhood. There are plenty of elements that contribute to executive function, but the basics are all covered by the things we've highlighted throughout this book: play, fun activities, social interaction.



Physical activity = mental acuity & sharpness

Research shows that active kids are their healthiest and happiest selves. Not only that, they are also smarter and show greater levels of creativity which in terms makes more confident.



School is the ideal, safe environment for kids to get active throughout the school day and to reach the recommended levels of physical activity per day by partaking in unstructured, creative free play, activities outside the classroom, sports that require team participation, physical education classes, and playtimes that are actively led by the teacher. However, with COVID-19 came online classes, followed by a return to school with no more PE classes and sports, which has resulted in a drastic decline in physical activity.

Physical activity and academic performance are inextricably linked. **Research has showed that active kids perform much better at school.** Physical activity during break times or PE classes is associated with improved marks, improved cognitive performance, higher levels of concentration on school-related tasks (which enables learning and memory), as well as improved mathematics, reading, writing and spelling skills. Physical activity also means that kids often feel less stressed, they're able to solve problem better, and they see

school assignments with fresh eyes. In fact, the best academic results came from scheduling physical education classes before lunchtime instead of later on.

Any form of physical activity releases endorphins and serotonin - the hormones that improve our mood and performance. And when an activity is done outdoors, our bodies get the vitamin D we sorely need, which lifts the mood. Kids also sleep better and feel more rested.

Many people largely underestimate the hugely positive benefits of regular movement, exercise and active play for kids in areas beyond physical development. As kids become fitter and stronger through play, their newly learned skills build their confidence and makes them feel proud of what they done. Every step in this process builds towards developing better executive function.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do practice, practice, practice - these skills can be developed, improved on and honed with practice.
- Do promote an appreciation for physical activity, and the mental acuity will follow.
- Do explain the need for endorphins and spend time together getting them flowing.
- Don't push prolonged periods of focus and activities that your kid doesn't find enjoyable - create a safe space and have fun.



Activity Ideas for executive function

From working on throwing skills and hand-eye coordination to memory and coordination, here are some activity ideas per age group.



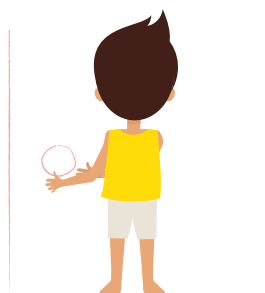
18 months - 3 years

Cut a big hole into the side of a large box and show your child how to throw a ping-pong or tennis ball into the hole



18 months - 3 years

Set up a row of empty plastic bottles or toilet rolls, then give your child balls of various sizes and ask them to throw or kick them to knock over the skittles



4 - 7 years

With their side facing a wall, ask your child to take a soccer ball and twist their body to throw the ball against the wall (change sides after each throw)



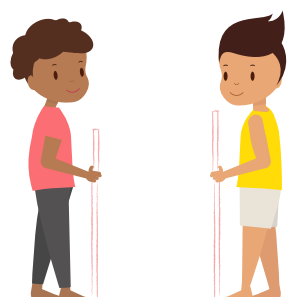
4 - 7 years

In a push-up position, place 3/4 coloured rings or pieces of paper around them, then call out a colour sequence and have them touch each colour in that order



8 - 13 years

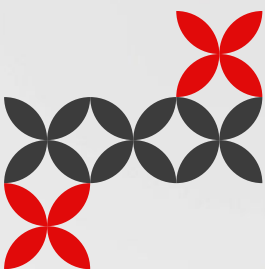
With each squat or activity of choice, ask your child to verbalise a sum or multiplication. It'll keep them active and work on their body while working on their mind



8 - 13 years

Have 2 kids stand 2m apart each holding a stick or broom out in front of them, then call out "ready, set, go", on go the kids drop their sticks and try and catch the other stick before it hits the ground

A day in the life: 18 months to 3 years



Watching your kids develop and learn at any age is amazing, but the 18 month to 3 years period is particularly astonishing because it's the one where you begin to see them piecing together the basic skills and moving from 'baby' to 'small child'. They're walking, talking and expressing what they're feeling. Towards 3 years, you're able to start reasoning with them (to an extent!), negotiating and the 'why?' questions start to arrive.

It's an incredible time - and there's plenty you can do to help them continue to thrive and grow to set them up in the best possible way for the next few years.



Mornings

A switch to more flexible working conditions, post-lockdown, may see at least one parent able to work from home with younger kids. At the same time, South African parents have an array of different schedules, including kids that attend crèche or daycare for a few hours a day, or full-time crèche or daycare, or stay home with a nanny or extended family member. Regardless of your kid's routine and how they spend their days, never forget the importance of establishing and sticking to a routine in your child's life. As they get a little older, they'll start to learn and understand their schedule, but it does help to remind them what's happening that day so they can go out and enjoy themselves.

When it comes to quantities of food at meal and snack times, remember that a **young child's stomach is generally as big as their fist**. If you'd like a measure, aim for 1 tablespoon of each food, for each year of life. You'll soon know if they'd like more or are full.

Lots of parents don't want their kids to make a mess or get their hands or faces dirty when eating - but that's an essential, particularly before the age of 2. Your child will explore different types of food not only in terms of how it tastes, but also how it looks, smells, and feels. Let them feed themselves when they're old enough, and touch, feel and put the food in their mouths to get a proper understanding of taste, texture, and smell.

Try this as a sample menu for their breakfast-lunch schedule, whether they're at home or heading to daycare:

Breakfast:

½ cup low fat milk
½ cup cereal or porridge (with 1 teaspoon honey if they'd like it a little sweeter)
⅓ cup any fruit OR ¼ cup fruit juice (always diluted half/half)

Mid-morning snack:

½ mashed or sliced small banana
¼ cup yoghurt
½ cup water





At school or at home

Both structured and unstructured play are important in this age group - though there's more of a lean towards unstructured play. Both types of play have benefits for kids in this age group. Certain skills will develop naturally - like running - but skills like catching and throwing need to be taught and practised. Structured sessions should be engaging, interactive and teach specific skills.

Whether they're at daycare, playschool or at home with you, they'll still need plenty of activity to get them stimulated, exploring and developing their physical abilities and getting their little hearts pumping.

Here are some activities you can try with them, or they're likely to try at playschool, too:



- **Stop, slow, go**
 - The stop, slow, go game works on your child's running. Take three paper plates and draw the words "STOP", "SLOW" and "GO" on them.
 - If you use red for stop, orange for slow, and green for go, you can also teach your kids about the colours of a traffic light during this activity.
 - Find something you can use as a beacon or take a piece of tape and place it at the end of your garden, driveway, passage or room. Ask your kids to stand at the beacon, while you stand a distance away from them with the paper plates. Your kids must run towards you following the instructions on whichever paper plate you hold up - run for the GO plate, walk for SLOW and come to a standstill for STOP.
 - For younger toddlers, instead of using the traffic light system, they can stop when you clap your hands; or you could call out the instructions.
- **Catch!**
 - Catching is a skill that takes time and patience to develop. Show your child how to stand with their hands and arms stretched out in front of their stomach.
 - Then take a large, soft foam ball (you can also use socks that are stuffed into one another) and throw it towards your child's hands from about 50cm away.
 - As your child gets better at catching, you can start to increase the distance between the two of you. Make sure you use lots of praise so that your child is encouraged to continue trying even after they've missed.
- **Hopscotch**
 - Hopscotch is an age-old game that is great for developing your kid's hopping skills.
 - Use chalk to draw different shapes in a straight line, one after the other, or cut out A4 pages that are securely taped to your floor with masking tape.
 - Make sure the size of the shapes correspond with your child's age and size so that they can easily walk or hop from one shape to the next.
 - Put your hands above your head like bunny ears while hopping to make this game even more fun! You can use this activity to teach your kids about shapes as they hop from one to the next.
- **Kick bowls**
 - This activity is a twist on traditional bowling and works on your child's kicking ability. Set up a row of "skittles" in the form of empty plastic bottles, paper towel or toilet rolls.
 - Give your child balls of various sizes and ask them to kick the balls. Cheer for them each time they knock skittles over with a ball.
 - Use larger "skittles" and balls for younger kids so they can complete the activity easily.



Afternoons

If you're collecting the kids at lunchtime, it would help to have lunch ready to go. If they're staying on for aftercare, they'll likely eat there - consider packing an additional snack if lunch or an afternoon snack isn't provided.

Lunch:

½ sandwich - 1 slice wholewheat bread

1 teaspoon margarine

30g (matchbox size) chicken or cheese or 1 egg

2 - 3 carrot sticks (cut up) or 2 tablespoons other dark- yellow or dark-green vegetable

½ of any fruit (e.g. grated apple)

½ cup low fat milk

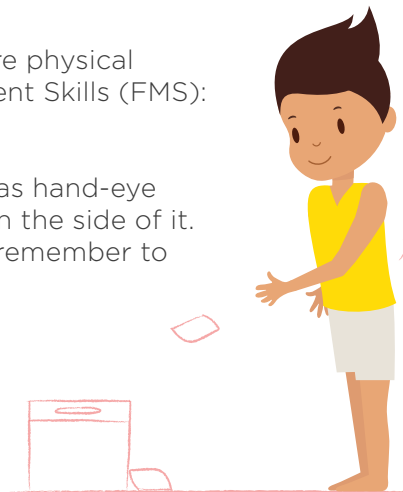


They'll probably be a little tired after a morning of activity, so the younger ones may still take a nap after lunch.

Once they're up and about again, you can try a few more physical activities to work on the essential Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS):

- **Balls in a box**

- This activity is fantastic for throwing skills as well as hand-eye coordination. Take a large box and cut a big hole in the side of it.
- Let your child stand a metre away from the box - remember to adjust the distance based on their age. Give them some ping-pong or tennis balls and show them how to throw the balls into the hole.
- If you don't have balls or boxes at home, you can scrunch up pieces of paper or newspaper and throw them into a laundry basket.



- **Animal walks**

Animal walks are simple and fun activities that anyone can do to get a quick dose of gross motor skills in their day.

- **Crab walk:** Start by squatting down close to the ground. Lean backwards and place your hands on the ground. You should look like a "tabletop" now. Walk sideways, while holding your bottom off the ground and your back straight.
- **Bear walk:** Start in the standing position. Bend over and put both hands on the ground. Now, walk forward with the same leg and arm. Move your right arm and right leg forward, then the left leg and arm at the same time, then repeat. For an additional challenge, try keeping your legs and arms straight.
- **Frog jumps:** Start in a squat position. Place your hands on the floor in-between your knees. Using your feet, jump forward and land with your hands and feet on the ground.
- **Crocodile push-ups:** Lay on your belly and push up into a plank with your hands and toes. As you walk, push up with your hands while trying to keep your body as straight as possible.
- **Kangaroo jumps:** Starting in the standing position, put both feet together and squat down. Jump as high as you can using only your feet, and no hands.
- **Spider walk:** Children can position themselves on all fours, with their heads facing the floor. They can then walk on their hands and on the balls of their feet, keeping their backsides up. This exercise builds strength in the body's core area. Tip: you can also tape up your own spider web on the floor for a more creative spider walk pattern.

Afternoon snack:

± 4 crackers with either cheese (15g of gouda), hummus or peanut butter

¼ cup juice diluted OR ½ cup water



Dinnertime

Bearing in mind the idea that your child's nutrient needs are higher than the volume of food they can eat, you should always try to pack maximum nutritional value into dinner and their pre-bedtime snack, to help sustain them through the night. They'll sleep better and likely wake up a little happier.

Start - if you haven't already - to have them eat some of the same kinds of food that the rest of the family eats at mealtime. This is the start of modelling a positive relationship with food - if everyone else is eating it, it must be good!

Dinner:

45g cooked mince

2 tablespoons mashed potato

1 tablespoon mashed/cubed butternut

2 tablespoons vegetables (broccoli, green beans, baby marrows etc.)

½ a cup of low fat milk



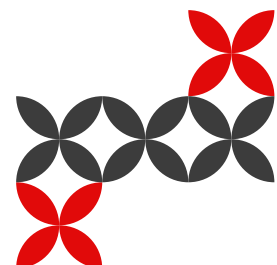
Pre-bedtime

If they're not looking tired yet - or even just to help them work on their posture - you can do a few slow activities with them. It's important not to get them too agitated, or that will have a knock-on effect and they won't be relaxed enough to sleep come bedtime.

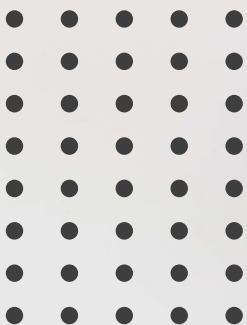
Try:

- Rolling your child on their stomach, on a Pilates ball.
- Sitting down together and try to keep a balloon afloat.

Just before bedtime its best to ensure they have water available, and you can offer a small nutrition boost (like a banana flap jack or mashed bananas or an egg) . Children tend to sleep better when they are satiated - having eaten a balanced diet throughout the day, and they can also enjoy a ½ a cup of milk with a teaspoon of Ovaltine or honey for flavour.



A day in the life: 4 to 7 years





There are certain aspects of life that parents and caregivers need to pay specific attention to, to help their kids grow and thrive. While every day is different, we've put together a **'sample day' of dietary requirements, physical activity and mental exercises** that you can use as a template to make sure they're on the right developmental track.

Mornings

For many young kids, getting them up in time for school isn't the biggest challenge. It's getting them dressed, fed, packed and out of the house that can be tricky! You can help make that process easier with a bit of

preparation the night before - pre-packing at least some elements of their lunch and working with them before bedtime to pick out an outfit and get their little school bags ready.

Breakfast has always been seen as the most important meal of the day, setting them up for a day of vigorous physical activity and supporting their growth needs.

Breakfast:

Cereal with berries

Wholegrain cereal ($\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of flakes or $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 cup of puffed cereal)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup berries

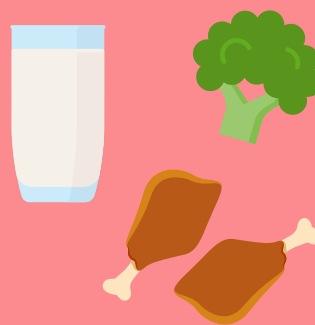
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup low-fat or fat-free (from age 5) milk or unsweetened soya milk

Mid-morning snack:

Nut butter (or nut free alternative) & banana

1 small banana

1 tablespoon almond or cashew or peanut butter



Lunch:

Carrot sticks & dip

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup carrot sticks

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dark-yellow or dark-green vegetables

Dip made with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low fat plain yoghurt

Chicken mayo sandwich

1 - 2 slices wholegrain bread

45 - 60g chicken

1 tbsp reduced-fat mayonnaise

Lunch should accompany a hydrating glass of water and a water bottle should be sent to school with them each day, as this age group requires about 5 glasses of fluid per day (water, milk, diluted 100% fruit juice etc.).



At school or at home

Young kids should be physically active throughout the day for healthy growth and development. They need to spend at least 3 hours per day on physical activity, of which 1 hour must be moderate to vigorous play that raises their heart and breathing rates and increases blood flow.

At school, they should receive a mix of class time and free playtime outside, so that they get the right mix of structured and unstructured play. As they get older, kids get less unstructured playtime at school, so it's important that they get additional time at home for their daily physical activity requirements.

If you're at home with them, here are a few activities to mix and match:

Younger kids (4 to 5 years)

• Animal jumps

- Use the animal jumps game to get your kids jumping. Role play that you're visiting an animal sanctuary or game reserve and ask your child to show you how a frog, springbok or kangaroo jumps.
- Encourage them to make animal noises while they jump.
- You can add an extra element of fun to this activity by painting their face as their chosen animal, or even putting a sprinkler on so that they can play with it, or jump back and forth over it, if they are older.

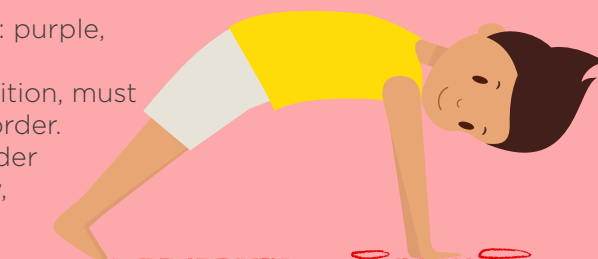
Older kids (6 to 7 years)

• Twist and throw

- To practise twisting and the use of oblique muscles on the sides of their tummies, ask your kids to stand close to a wall, with their side facing the wall.
- They must take a soccer ball (or similar-sized ball) and twist their body to throw the ball against the wall and catch it again.
- Do this a few times on 1 side, before turning to do it on the other side.

• Colour push-ups

- This exercise works on upper body strength, as well as colour recognition, memory, and improving coordination.
- Ask your child to get into the push-up position. Place 3 or 4 coloured rings or pieces of paper around them.
- Call out a colour sequence, for example: purple, green, yellow, green and so on.
- Your child, remaining in the push-up position, must use 1 hand to touch each colour in that order.
- Make the sequence more difficult for older kids. For example: Red, blue, red, yellow, green, yellow, blue.



• Number jumping

- To practise your kids' jumping skills, write out 2 sets (for 2 kids) of the numbers 1 to 10 on paper plates or sheets of paper.
- Stick the plates or papers randomly to the floor, using Prestik or doubled-sided tape.
- Give your kids a high number, like 8. Your kids must then jump from the paper plate with the number 1 on it, to 2, to 3, all the way to 8, being careful not to bump into each other.
- This exercise helps with kids' spatial awareness, number recognition and visual tracking skills.
- You can play this game with more than 1 child at a time and can use numbers higher than 10, depending on their age.



Afternoons

Young kids need to eat smaller, more frequent meals - don't forget that their stomachs are about the size of their fists.

Afternoon snack:

Pears & yoghurt

½ cup plain low-fat or fat-free (from age 5) yoghurt

½ cup pears, chopped or pureed

A few chopped walnuts or almonds



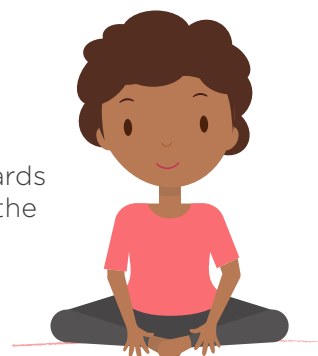
As you start to wind down towards dinner, bath time and bedtime, you can practise some stretches with them to work on their mobility.

Playful poses

Mimicking the movements of animals is a fun way to introduce stretches and mobility work to kids. It's vital to remember that each child has a unique range of movement and ability varies significantly by age. Here are a few examples of animal poses and movements to try with your child, depending on their age:

- **Animal poses**

- Upward cobra to downward dog
 - Roll a ball up and down the legs in a straddle position.
- Cat and cow
 - Lay on the back, take a bean bag between two feet and transfer it up above the head, into a small basket.
 - Sit in butterfly position and roll small balls forwards towards a corresponding colour dot; not allowing the ball out of the hands until it is in the correct colour dot.



Dinnertime

Having had two meals and two snacks throughout the day, dinnertime needs to give kids nutrition that will sustain them through the night.

Dinner:

Prepare a meal that the whole family can enjoy as it models good food behaviour. Try preparing the meal together whenever possible.

Mac & Cheese with vegetables

Tweak your traditional mac & cheese recipe by creating a white sauce made from low fat milk and flour seasoned with stock powder for a 'cheesy' flavour

Add cheddar (generally half the amount that recipes suggest)

Lay out in a casserole dish, fold in your pasta, add cooked/ steamed spinach, tomatoes, and your white sauce

Sprinkle with a bit of cheese and bake in the oven

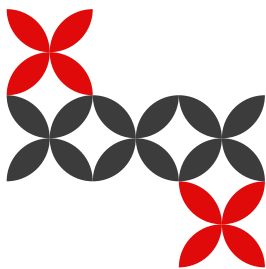
¾ to 1 cup is a good portion for children in this age group with ½ cup salad on the side

With the meal, ½ cup low-fat or fat-free milk.

After dinnertime and bath time, it may be a good opportunity to practise some breathing or meditation to help them wind down and prepare them for a good night's sleep.

Try these breathing activities with them:

- **Exercise 1**
 - Breathing correctly helps us bring oxygen to our bodies and relax and focus our minds. This breathing exercise is called 'Yoga Breathing'. In this exercise you are going to close your mouth and breathe through your nose.
 - Hold 1 hand on your heart and the other hand on your stomach.
 - Breathe in for 3 counts, hold for 1, breathe out for 4. Breathing through the nose.
 - Continue to lead this by counting "breathe in 2, 3. Hold the breath (for 1). Breathe out 2, 3, 4."
 - Do this 3 times with your kids.
- **Exercise 2**
 - Cake breath: Take a deep breath in through the nose, followed by a steady breath out through the mouth, as if blowing out candles on a giant cake.



Bedtime

Sleep is, as we all know, vital to development. It is also related to BMI - people who sleep less generally have a higher BMI. BMI is also related to physical activity - so sleep and plenty of physical activity are key to maintaining a healthy weight. There are also plenty of physical processes that take place during sleep, including anti-inflammatory responses that plays a major role in maintaining good health.

Younger kids require 11 to 13 hours of good sleep per day. There will be good nights and bad nights, but your aim should be to get them into bed and restful in time to allow for the maximum amount of sleep before the time you need to get them up to get ready for the day.

Bedtime snack:

A bedtime snack can be incorporated to your evening wind down routine and is important if your child is hungry, did not eat a large dinner, or if more than two hours have passed since dinner. It's also wise to bring in a bedtime snack if your child is in the midst of a growth spurt.

Good snack options include 1 small fruit, ½ cup of milk, ½ cup of yoghurt, or 1 - 2 crackers with peanut butter.

Establishing a bedtime routine is key, which includes reducing the use of devices, minimising noise and paying attention to the temperature of the room and the amount of light. You could try another breathing exercise here to help them relax after story time, or some gentle meditation for those 6 to 7 year-olds.

A day in the life: 8 to 13 years





While your child's growth slows from between the ages of 7 and 8 years, their energy needs actually rise because they are more active and starting to participate in team sports.

Kids in the later stages of primary school, getting ready for high school, are likely to have established the Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) and are probably starting to engage in more sport-specific skills as they participate in team sports at school - activities like learning to shoot with a netball or pass a rugby ball.

Mornings

As their levels of activity increase, their bodies start to change, and they are working in more structured ways both in and out of the classroom - nutrition becomes a big factor in this age group. Energy is vital for these kids, and starting their day off with a good breakfast is key to sustaining their energy levels throughout the day. Fuelling their bodies and minds so they're well set-up for their day is essential, as is making sure that they continue to nurture the good food and eating behaviours you've modelled for them during their formative years.

Breakfast:

1 wholewheat wrap filled with
1 - 2 scrambled eggs
Sliced orange
½ - 1 cup low-fat or fat-free milk

Mid-morning snack:

2 - 4 tablespoons of almonds and
dried, chopped apricots
Sandwich of wholegrain bread and
60g cheese, with some sliced tomato
or cucumber.



Afternoons

At this age, afternoons are usually taken up by after-school activities - which is great. Just make sure that they're not taking place at the expense of homework or that your kids don't feel overworked at the end of each day. **Physical activity and good nutrition both boost academic performance, but balance remains key.**

Lunch:

If they're having lunch at home, consider a pasta salad (1 cup wholewheat pasta with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced cherry tomatoes and 60g of chicken), with an apple - and water or diluted fruit juice.



If they're not participating in any afternoon activities, you can set some up, yourself. Work on their agility with drills like:

- **Carioca**
 - Step right foot over left.
 - Step left foot over right.
 - Repeat using the arms and twisting the hips during the movement.
- **Cross-over skips**
 - Side skip to the left, bringing the right knee across the body.
 - Then side skip to the right, bringing the left knee across the body.
- **Single leg balances**
 - Standing on 1 leg, reach out with the opposite hand and slowly touch the floor about 40cm in front of the supporting leg.
 - Repeat on the other leg.



To mix learning and play, try:

- **Squatting maths**
 - This activity requires your child to squat (or choose their favourite activity of choice) as they practise their maths.
 - Younger kids can use addition and subtraction for this activity - ask them to count out loud, while older kids can recite their times tables.
 - With each squat or activity, ask your child to verbalise the sum. For example: squat (1), squat (plus 2), squat (equals 3). Or, squat (10), squat (times 6), squat (equals 60).
- **Lunging letters**
 - Get your kids to recite the alphabet, doing a deep lunge for each letter. Make sure that the back leg stays straight and stationary as the child steps forward with the other leg.
 - You will need to do this exercise in a long passage, driveway or garden. Don't worry if the child has to turn around a few times - it's all part of the fun! Older kids can spell out the words they are learning at school.

Afternoon snack:

For a post-activity snack, give them a banana or a cup of steamed, salted edamame beans and some water.

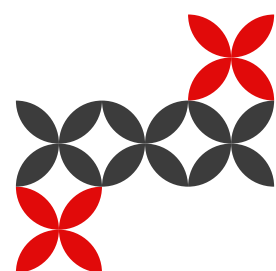
Bedtime

In older kids who sadly start to experience stress because of a busy schedule and developing emotions - breathing exercises can be a powerful tool to help them wherever they are and whenever they need it. It's especially helpful in preparation for an exam, helping them manage anger or nervousness - and to calm down before bedtime.

Meditation can have a positive effect on focus, self-esteem, emotional regulation, sleep patterns and quality, regulation of behaviour and self-awareness. It develops a better capacity to deal with and manage stress and improves resilience. As a daily practice, it is an opportunity for them to unplug and just BE - **to slow down, breathe deeply, clear their minds, and connect.**

Try these pre-bedtime breathing activities:

- **Lion's breath**
 - Kneel and sit on the heels with eyes closed.
 - Tighten all your muscles, stretch out your arms, inhale, then push out your tongue and focus your eyes on a spot between your eyebrows.
 - On the exhalation, make an 'aaaahhhh' sound. This exercise helps to release tension and anger.
- **Humming bee**
 - Inhale normally through the nose then while exhaling through the mouth, make a humming sound.
 - Kids can also block their ears with their index fingers and close their eyes to enhance the experience.



About Club-V & Club-V Max



How can we help?

Our kids are born to move. They're born to play. And they're born to enjoy active, healthy lifestyles. From toddlers to tweens, Club-V and Club-V Max is a fun and safe environment to nurture their love for staying active as they grow.

Our kids-only facilities, available in most clubs across the country, offer a secure space for your kids to move while you train with peace of mind! Active kids are happy kids and the same goes for you - so let us take them off your hands for a bit and allow you all to enjoy your time moving.

Club-V

Virgin Active Club-V offers a secure and safe environment for children aged from 6 weeks to 7 years and is access-controlled and monitored by our trained team on the ground. We offer scientifically developed

movement skills programmes for younger kids, as well as nursery and care facilities for the littles.

Club-V Max

Club-V Max is just that - everything we offer in Club-V plus more! And it's suitable for kids from 6 weeks to 13 years. With larger facilities, multiple activity zones, and an additional focus on the older kids (8 to 13 years), we have everything they need to develop and enhance their motor skills while still having fun along the way!

6 weeks to 18 months - Littles

For the littles, we've created a safe and stimulating environment where they can nap and play while you're at the gym. There is a temperature-controlled nursery with a fully equipped changing station and when baby's up, we'll keep them busy with age-appropriate activities.



18 months to 3 years - Mini Movers

Designed in conjunction with Stellenbosch Kinderkinetics, our toddler programme focuses on improving the 9 key skills in the rudimentary phase of motor development: running, jumping, hopping, throwing, catching, kicking, striking, static balance and dynamic balance.

4 to 7 years - Active Play

Also designed in conjunction with Stellenbosch Kinderkinetics, your kids will master fundamental motor skills: running, jumping, hopping, throwing, catching, kicking, striking, galloping, static balance, and dynamic balance.

8 to 13 years - FUNctional Fitness

We offer a range of activities and classes inside our Club-V Max facilities as well as in our studios. Under your supervision, between the ages of 8 and 13 they can use the swimming pools, squash courts, stretch areas, an array of cardio equipment as well as attend age-appropriate adult group exercise classes.

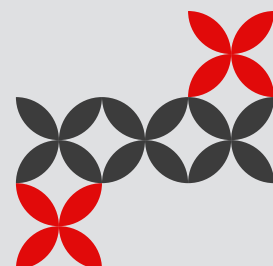
Some of the movement classes available in Club-V Max include:

- **Grid Squad** - which puts the fun into functional training, teaching kids 6 primal movement skills, while having loads of fun.
- **Boost** - our drills-centric class that develops speed, power, agility and quickness, turning your kids into better movers for life.
- **Game On** - aimed at getting kids breathlessly active with playground-inspired movement activities.
- **Go52** - a fun High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) class, introducing kids to the wonderful world of bodyweight training.

Swimming

Swimming lessons are available for children from the age of 6 months to 13 years. These lessons include water safety for babies, general swimming lessons and pool safety and then swimming skills development to squad training for older kids. Free swim assessments will be done to determine the appropriate skill level to ensure the best fit for young swimmers to grow and develop a safe love of water with confidence.

- **Little Dippers** - the focus is on water safety and developing your little swimmer's skills. You accompany your little one in the pool, so it's not only fun but also reassuring for them.
- **Big Dippers** - things get a little more advanced for the bigger kids, but each child will be coached based on their skill levels. So, whether they've been swimming a while or not, we've got a class for them.





It takes a village, let us be part of yours

It's now more important than ever to acknowledge and place focus on the immense cognitive, social, behavioural/emotional, physical and psychological benefits of movement and physical activity for our kids. Active kids are not only healthier and happier but also smarter, more creative and more confident.

An active lifestyle is not only essential for children's physical growth and disease prevention, it also positively impacts their health and wellbeing later in life. Numerous studies show positive correlations between moderate physical activity of any kind and children's mood and emotional wellbeing, as well as their physical, cognitive, psychological and social development.

Physical activity positively impacts brain function, reflexes, and reaction times as well as creative skills. In fact, an increase in physical activity and longer weekly exercise routines are associated with higher intelligence and emotional development during childhood. By developing healthy exercise habits in kids from an early age, parents can help their kids form lifelong healthy routines.

We are passionate about making it as fun and easy as possible for parents, caregivers and educators to help our kids move and that's why we created this book.

While there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to tracking and guidance on the different stages of childhood development, the insights included in this book have been carefully curated to provide a base for almost any South African child.



To our expert contributors, developing this book and curating an insights and ideas-rich guide, filled with all that is needed to know to assist with childhood development would not have been possible without the support, dedication, and collaboration provided by each author and contributor. **Thank you.**

To our readers, let Virgin Active be part of your village and support you in all aspects of your child's life, developing healthy habits and giving them the best start possible. We hope that your family benefits from the read, the activities and the tips in this book and we hope to see your family at one of our kids facilities soon!

**Catherine Coupar,
Virgin Active's National
Junior Member Manager**

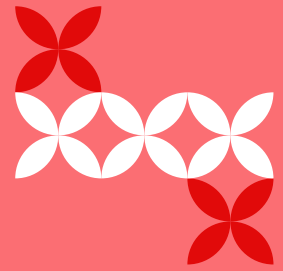


Need assistance?

The content of this book has been carefully curated and provided by our qualified experts across their fields of interest and expertise. If you're looking for assistance or want to investigate their services, their information and business details are included below. We have also curated some additional information and kids' activity online videos to help you keep the kiddos moving.



- More information on our [membership options and facilities for kids](#)
- Join Virgin Active and benefit from the latest promotional offer:
[Kids](#)
[Adults](#)
- Get a [free guest pass](#) to explore our facilities
- Virgin Active activity videos and online workouts [YouTube playlist](#)
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[Website](#)
[Instagram](#)
- Joëlle Sleenbos Yoga:
[Website](#)
[Instagram](#)
- Dr Phathokuhle Zondi:
[Instagram](#)
[LinkedIn](#)
[Twitter](#)
- Arthur Ramoroka, corporate nutritionist for Tiger Brands:
[LinkedIn](#)
- Hear more from our experts on the [Optimal Optimism podcast](#) as hosted by CliffCentral



▶▶▶▶ Click here

if you're not a Virgin Active member and we'll SMS you a **guest pass** to come and try us out for size. Arrive with your kids and our team at reception will give you 2 free guest passes for Club-V*.

If you're **already a Virgin Active member**, simply bring your kids to the club with you and chat to reception, they will give you 2 free guest passes so your kids can try out Club-V while you train.

See you soon!

*Please note, that while most of our clubs have kids' facilities, there are a few that don't. Give the club team a call if you'd like to double check before arriving with your brood.

