

Active Play Every Day

For 3- to 5-year-olds

Why is active play important?

Active play helps preschoolers learn, grow and sleep well. Preschoolers build motor skills and learn about the world by playing. Active play is a time families can have fun together. It's one of the most important gifts you can give your child.

How much active play does my preschooler need?

Preschoolers need lots of active play time. For this age, the goal is at least 3 hours (180 minutes) of active play each day. Your preschooler should play every hour throughout the day for about 15 minutes at a time.

How can I help my preschooler have active play every day?

At home:

- Try running, jumping, dancing, kicking balls, throwing, marching, rolling, climbing, sliding, balancing, twisting and exploring.*
- Play games like tag, hide-and-seek and “walk like an animal.”
- Find toys that help your child move, like tricycles, balance bikes (bikes without pedals), wagons, soccer balls and plastic balls.*
- Play outside every day, if possible. Playing in the rain and snow can be great fun as long as you have the right clothes for cold weather.
- Aim for less than 2 hours of screen time, if any. Screen time includes TV, computers, video games, tablets (like an iPad) and smart phones (like an iPhone).



At daycare and preschool:

- Remind your daycare or preschool to make time for lots of active play, especially outdoors. Send your child with the right clothes for the weather so they can get outside every day.

At your local playground:

- Play with your child at an outdoor playground near you. It's great to walk there if you can!
- During summer, you can also visit a wading pool (outdoor, shallow pool) near you.

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At your local community center:

- Many community centers have drop-in indoor play gyms that charge a small fee each visit and many have preschool classes like dance and t-ball.
- Check with your local community center for class fees, registration and scholarships.

At your local YMCA:

- YMCAs have indoor play gyms and classes, like dance and t-ball. Many YMCAs also have pools. Their programs require a paid membership, but scholarships are available.
- To find the YMCA nearest you and get information about membership, program fees, registration and scholarships, visit: <http://ymca.net>.

At your local pool:

- Many pools have swimming classes for 3- to 5-year-olds and family swim times. When your child is 4 years old, think about taking them to swimming lessons.
- Check with your local pool for fees, registration and scholarships.

Where will your family go for active play?

Playground: _____

Community center: _____

YMCA: _____

Pool: _____

*Adapted from Let's Go (www.letsgo.org) and The American Academy of Pediatrics' Healthy Children (www.healthychildren.org).

WA-PLAY (Washington Physical Activity for the Young) is a Healthy Active Living Initiative supported by a grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics with generous funding from MetLife Foundation. WA-PLAY helps promote physical activity for 0- to 5-year-olds from diverse communities in Seattle and King County.

To Learn More

- www.seattlechildrens.org
- Your child's healthcare provider

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205 or 206-987-2280 (TTY).

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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