

The Need for Physical Activity Guidelines in Child Care

Results from a study involving 144 children in 31 family child care homes in King County



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Child care matters for child health

More than 60% of children under age six are in non-parental care on a regular basis, and over one million of these children receive care in licensed family child care homes.¹

Physical activity throughout the day helps children develop, stay well and maintain a healthy weight. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that children should accumulate at least 120 minutes of physical activity in structured and free play.²

Most children in child care were sedentary

Researchers at the University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition used accelerometers—devices that measure vibration caused by movement—to measure the physical activity of 144 preschool children in 31 family child care homes.³ The quantity and quality of physical activity in child care varied, but children were mostly sedentary. Children spent an average of 57% of their time in sedentary activities; in some homes children were sedentary up to 96% of the time.

Physical activity was too brief and not vigorous enough

None of the child care homes met the guidelines for physical activity. Based on an 8-hour day in child care, in one home children were only moderately to vigorously active for about 30 minutes per day. Children in eight homes averaged less than 60 minutes of activity per 8-hour day.

Insufficient physical activity in child care settings increases the risk of childhood obesity in vulnerable children.

Set guidelines for physical activity in child care



- Home child care providers need support and guidance to help them incorporate physical activity into daily routines.
- State and local public health practitioners can provide the needed technical assistance and training.
- Experts and national leaders call on local and state policymakers to establish and strengthen policies to increase physical activity in child care.⁴

References

- ¹ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being*, 2007.
- ² NASPE. *Appropriate Practices in Movement Programs for Young Children Ages 3-5*, 2000.
- ³ Kirkpatrick S, Monsivais P, Johnson DB. *Physical Activity in Family Child Care Homes*. (Submitted)
- ⁴ National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Caring for Our Children*, 2011.

For more information see www.cphn.org



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