

Great Ideas

for Great Balls of Fun!

There are lots of ways to have a ball with physical activity. This section provides some practical ideas including:

- Active Ideas at Your Fingertips
- Program Examples
- Active Events
- Make Physical Activity a Slam Dunk! Ideas to help keep the physical in your activities



Active Ideas...at Your Fingertips!

Here are some active ideas for you to use at a moment's notice, or to use as thought starters for other physical activity opportunities.

Hopscotch

Jumping and hopping are great ways to help build healthy bones. Hopscotch provides an entertaining and educational way to practice these skills. Indoors, use masking tape to outline the boxes on the floor. Outdoors, use sidewalk chalk on pavement or spray paint on grass. To increase the challenge, make the squares bigger for longer leaps. Add a twist by incorporating colour or letter recognition, the children's names, etc. in place of a number in each square.

The Wonders of Walking

Explore your neighbourhood on foot with some entertaining ideas.

Alphabet Walk: Find objects during your walk that start with each letter of the alphabet.

Let me Count the Ways: Have the children count the steps it takes them to walk from one line in the sidewalk to another, or from one telephone pole to another, or to your destination.

Variety Walk: Walk slowly, quickly, with heavy loud steps, on tiptoes, with long strides, with tiny steps, run, skip, hop, walk in a straight, curved, zig zag path, etc.; step, jump, hop over sidewalk cracks. Go from one telephone pole to another.

Crazy Sports

Take your favourite sport and change the rules!

Hockey: Play using a pool noodle and koosh ball.

Badminton: Take a metal hanger and pull the straight edge to form a circle/diamond shape. Then pull a pair of old nylons over it to make it into a racquet. Straighten the hook so it can be used as a handle and cover the sharp end with tape. Use a sponge as the bird.

Bowling: Use a soft utility ball and clean, empty, plastic juice containers (2L) or empty tennis ball cans as the pins.

Volleyball: Tie a pair of old nylons across two small chairs for the net and use a large, soft beach ball.

Skating: Provide each child with two pieces of 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Ask them to put one piece of paper under each foot, then stride forward and backward on a large carpeted or tiled area. They can figure skate, speed skate, and even go cross-country skiing!

Blanket Gymnastics: Spread some blankets on the floor and tumble, roll, and balance.

Great Ideas

for Great Balls of Fun!

Dress-Up Race

Place an oversized T-shirt, shorts and a pair of rubber gloves on two chairs at one end of the room or play area. Divide the children into two groups. Each child will either run, hop, skip, or gallop to the chair, put on the clothes and gloves and then return to the starting line. The child then takes off the clothes and gloves and gives them to the next child who puts them on and repeats the relay.

Animal Chase

Have children sit or stand in a circle. Start by passing a stuffed animal (or beanbag) to one child. The animal is then passed around the circle from child to child. While the first animal is going around, another stuffed animal is introduced. The object of the activity is for the second stuffed animal to catch up with the first. More than two animals can be introduced.

Around the World

Ask children to form a big circle. Call out a colour. The children wearing that colour run around the world (outside of the circle, in the same direction). Continue to call colours until all the children have had a chance to run. Have children use different locomotor movements (skip, gallop, leap) to move around the outside.

Story Time

- Have the children pretend to be characters from a book or song. Choose active songs, stories, and poetry. Examples include:
 - *Danny O'Dare* from *Falling Up* by Shel Silverstein
 - *Shine, Shine, Shine* from *If You Could Wear My Sneakers* by Sheree Fitch
 - *Where is Gah-Ning?* by Robert Munsch
- Select fiction and non-fiction stories and poems that focus on the enjoyment of being physically active.
- Read *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV*. Discuss and act out different physical activities the children could do in place of watching TV.

Obstacle Course

Use boxes, chairs, pillows and other common items to jump over, crawl under, and move around.

Active Board Games

Play an active board game such as Twister or add actions to traditional board games. For example, in the game Candy Land, assign an action to each colour on the board. Each time a child rolls that colour, they do the action assigned to that colour, then resume playing the game.

Action TV

Purchase or borrow active videos that the children can move to. Some videos include:

- *Wiggle Time*, The Wiggles
- *Workout with Ticker*, Stretch and Grow
- *SS Elmocize*, Sesame Street
- *Get Up and Dance*, Sesame Street

(For information on how to obtain these videos, see the section *Resources for Physical Activity and the Early Years*.)

Active Alphabet

- Have the children use their bodies to form the different letters of the alphabet. Have the children do this independently or have them work in groups to form each letter (e.g. a group of three children would form the letter "A").
- Write down a word in big letters, then ask the children to spell each letter in the word by "writing" the letter down on the floor using their feet as an imaginary pencil.



Great Ideas

for Great Balls of Fun!



Program Examples

Ohm...to Yoga

Yoga for preschool children teaches them movement, posture, simple breathing and relaxation. It also promotes physical fitness, social and self-awareness. To offer Yoga to the children:

- Find a qualified instructor by calling your local recreation department or committee, or YMCA-YWCA, or by visiting www.yoga4kids.org
- Check with your local library for Yoga For Children videos

A Treasure Box of Ideas

Whether planned or spontaneous, a “treasure box of ideas” puts physical activity at your fingertips!

- The Simcoe County Diabetes Prevention Project joined forces with their Heart Health Coalition (Good for Life) to create Active Fun Kits that residents can borrow free of charge from a variety of community sites, such as local libraries, Parks and Recreation, the YMCA-YWCA and Ontario Early Years Centres. The kits include beanbags, hoola hoops, pylons, musical instruments, and parachutes, among other things for active play. Equipment can be used indoors or outdoors for team or individual games, at picnics and birthday parties. For more information, visit: www.simcoehealth.org/good_for_life/gflactivitykit.asp
- In the U.K. the Youth Sport Trust, through their Physical Activity for Preschool Children: Top Tots program, produced a “rucksack” of colourful equipment and activity cards featuring the character Sporty and friends. It is intended to provide a fun introduction to physical activities and games for children aged 18 months to 3 years. For more information, visit: www.youthsporttrust.org.
- The Calgary Health Region has produced the Snactivity Box. Intended for early childhood professionals in Child Care Centres or homes, the Snactivity Box contains 22 interactive activities to promote healthy eating and active living habits in children between two and six. The Snactivity Box contains written instructions and most of the

The following is a short list of some existing programs that Ontario Early Years Centres, Family Resource Programs and Child Care Centres are using to promote physical activity.

supplies needed to do the activities (packaged neatly in hanging file folders in an easy-to-carry plastic box). The kit includes 12 healthy eating activities and 10 active living activities.

For more information:

www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/hecomm/nal/ToddlersPreschoolers/ToddlersPreschoolers.htm.

Move to the Music

Movement to music is a natural way to encourage physical activity. Staff at an Ontario Family Resource Program developed a Music and Movement program incorporating the “Mousercise” tape where children follow the active instructions. They also provide rhythm sticks and scarves, and do ribbon dancing to music.

The Toys on the Bus Go Round and Round...

In Renfrew County, a Toy Bus travels to seven communities delivering services including:

- **Kids in the Kitchen** – A four-week program (one morning/week) involving children and parents/caregivers cooking a nutritious meal together; talking about Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating and healthy habits such as proper hand washing; and reading food labels. Children make their own apron at the beginning of the program and take it home at the end. All families take home a recipe book featuring the meals they have cooked as well as helpful hints for feeding picky eaters, serving sizes for toddlers and preschoolers, and healthy snack ideas.
- **Kindergym** – This six-week program geared towards children three to six years and their parents/caregivers involves talking to the children about why physical activity is important. Children and adults participate in obstacle courses, stretching exercises and activities set to well known children’s songs. For more information, email toybus@crc-renfrewcounty.com.



Great Ideas

for Great Balls of Fun!

Active Events

Special events, as well as theme days, weeks and months are a great way to focus on physical activity and get involved in the community. Here are a few examples to get you started. The information is divided in two categories: Physical Activity Events and Related Health Events. The Related Health Events can be celebrated with a physical activity spin! For more information, visit www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/calendar.html.

Physical Activity Events

May 10th – International Day for Physical Activity/Move for Health Day

<http://www.who.int/moveforhealth/en/>

Mid-May to Mid-June – SummerActive

<http://www.summeractive.canoe.ca/>

First week of October – International Walk to School Week

http://www.goforgreen.ca/walktoschool/home_e.html

First Wednesday of October – International Walk to School Day

http://www.goforgreen.ca/walktoschool/home_e.html

Third week of April – International TV-Turnoff Week

(The focus is literacy, but many health departments use this week to encourage physical activity).

<http://www.tvturnoff.org/index.htm>

Related Health Events

January	Family Literacy Day	http://www.nald.ca
February	Heart Month	www.heartandstroke.ca
March	Nutrition Month	http://www.dietitians.ca
April	22nd - Earth Day	www.earthsite.org
	National Cancer Month	www.cancer.ca
May	12th – Canada Health Day	http://www.cpha.ca/chd/
	15th – International Day of Families	
June	5th - World Environment Day	http://www.unep.org/wed/2005/english/
July	Canada Parks Day	www.parksday.ca
September	Third Sunday – Terry Fox Run	http://www.terryfoxrun.org/
October	Breast Cancer Awareness Month	www.cancer.ca
	National Family Week	http://www.familyservicecanada.org/nfw/2004/index_e.html
November	Osteoporosis Month	www.osteoporosis.ca
	Diabetes Month	www.diabetes.ca
	14th – World Diabetes Day	www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english
	20th – National Child Day	Several websites - search using www.google.ca



Great Ideas

for Great Balls of Fun!



Make Physical Activity A Slam Dunk!

Given the importance of physical activity to an individual's physical, social and intellectual health, and knowing how important the early years are for establishing life-long habits and beliefs, this section provides five tips to help keep the "physical" in your activities!

Five Tips to Keep the "Physical" in Your Activities!

1. Establish a policy or guideline that includes structured and unstructured physical activity as a necessary part of the daily routine, regardless of the weather.
2. Develop a School Readiness Program that includes a list of physical skills for children that staff can use when developing program plans.
3. Allocate specific funding for physical activity programming. Include in your policy or guidelines that these funds would be available annually, just as they are for other learning materials.
4. Organize active fundraisers. Host a walk, play day or fun fair with physical activity opportunities. In place of unhealthier choices, such as candy and cookie sales, consider healthier food options, magazines or books, active equipment, or hobby supplies. The money raised could go directly to support the purchase of physical activity equipment and supplies.
5. Purchase equipment, supplies, toys, and books that support physical activity. Some ideas for equipment include:
 - WINTERGREEN – www.wintergreen.ca
 - Lettuce Make Thyme Inc. – www.lettucemakethyme.com
 - Dollar Stores

