

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
- Ideas to Help Keep the Physical in Your Activities
- Have a Ball with a Ball



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, 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, zigzag path, etc.; step, jump, hop over sidewalk cracks.

Crazy Sports

Take your favourite sport and change the rules!

Hockey: Play using a pool noodle and soft 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 empty plastic juice containers, flower pots or 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.



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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 locomotion 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.



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Program Examples

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.

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, hula 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.simcoemuskohealth.org/Topics/PhysicalActivity/Resources/BorrowAnActiveFunKit.aspx.
- In the U.K., the Youth Sport Trust, through their physical activity program for preschool children ‘Start to Play’, produced a “rucksack” of colourful equipment and activity cards featuring the character Fizz and friends. It is intended to provide a fun introduction to physical activities and games for children aged 0 to 5 years. For more information, visit: www.youthsporttrust.org.

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 Disney “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:

- Stir it Up with Kids in the Kitchen – A four-week program (one morning/week) involving children and parents/caregivers cooking a nutritious meal together; talking about Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide 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,

visit www.crc-renfrewcounty.com/toybus.html.



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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 into 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/ahc-asc/calend/index-eng.php.

Physical Activity Events

October – International Walk to School Month

www.saferoutestoschool.ca/international-walk-school-daymonth

Third week of April – International TV-Turnoff Week

The focus is quality of life and societal participation, but many health departments use this week to encourage physical activity.

www.whitedot.org/issue/fix_tvturnoffweek.asp

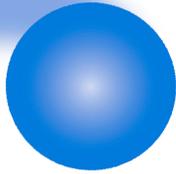


Related Health Events

January	Family Literacy Day	www.abclifeliteracy.ca/family-literacy-day
February	Heart Month	www.heartandstroke.ca
March	Nutrition Month	www.dietitians.ca
April	22nd - Earth Day	www.earthsite.org
	Daffodil Month/ Cancer Awareness	www.cancer.ca ; www.fightback.ca
May	12th – Canada Health Day	www.cha.ca
	15th – International Day of Families	www.un.org/en/events/familyday
June	5th - World Environment Day	www.unep.org/wed
	Safe Kids Week	www.safekidscanada.ca
July	Canada Parks Day	www.parksday.ca
September	Third Sunday – Terry Fox Run	www.terryfoxrun.org
October	Breast Cancer Awareness Month	www.cancer.ca
	National Family Week	www.frp.ca/nfw
November	Osteoporosis Month	www.osteoporosis.ca
	Diabetes Awareness Month	www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-awareness-month
	14th – World Diabetes Day	www.idf.org/worlddiabetesday
	20th – National Child Day	www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncd-jne/index-eng.php

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Ideas to Help Keep the Physical in Your Activities!

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!

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 will 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 healthier choices, such as cake and cookie sales, consider healthier food options, magazines or books, active equipment or hobby supplies. The money raised can go directly to support the purchase of physical activity equipment and supplies.
5. Purchase equipment, supplies, toys, and books that support physical activity.



Have a Ball... with a Ball!

In keeping with the Have a Ball theme, here are some great ways a whole group of children can have fun and get active with the beach ball. For best results, do not fully inflate the beach ball.

Free Throw...

In the group, have the children practice throwing and catching the ball, tossing it into the air and catching it, rolling it to each other or passing it to each other at different speeds.

On a Roll...

Using the chart below, write each of the six activities from the left hand column on a panel of the beach ball. Alternatively, make up your own active games and write those on the beach ball. Then, have the children sit in a circle. Ask one child to roll the beach ball into the centre of the circle. When the ball comes to a stop, the leader will read the message on the beach ball that is facing directly upward. The children will jump up and participate in that activity as a group.

Beach Ball Activities:					
If the ball shows... Dance	Jump up in the circle and... Put on a CD (already chosen and easily accessible) with upbeat music or with actions (e.g. Cha Cha Slide, Chicken Song) and...dance!				
Have a Ball!	Have the children use the beach ball, and perhaps some other balls of varying sizes and throw to each other and catch, toss in the air and catch, roll and/or bowl the ball, volley the ball, or spin it on the floor.				
5-minute fitness	Put on some upbeat music and have the children participate in a number of fitness activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jogging on the spot • Jumping jacks • Stride jumps • Push-ups • Marching on the spot • Stretching and deep breathing 				
Going to the Zoo	Put on music with animal sounds or use the music from the <i>Lion King</i> , then: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call out the name of an animal • Ask the children to move around the room as if they were that animal • Examples include: monkeys swinging, big elephant foot steps, slithering like a snake, hopping like a bunny or kangaroo, prancing like a pony, etc. 				
Follow the Leader	Lead the children in active movements that they imitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a sport theme, act out sport skills such as dribbling and shooting a basketball, swimming, hitting a baseball, cross country skiing, skating, playing hockey or skipping • Play active Simon Says (jumping jacks, marching on the spot). Use a sedentary action for when you do not say "Simon Says" (e.g. read a book) 				
Bean Bag Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide one bean bag to each child • Call out a part of the body • The child must place their bean bag on that part of the body and walk around the room without dropping the bean bag • Have the children balance the bean bag on their head, shoulder, back, back of their hand, etc. 				

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