



## What is the recommended physical activity for my child?

- A total of 60 minutes each day. This can be done in multiple sessions.
- Aerobic activities:
  - Should be done daily
  - Walking, running, hopping, arm circles, riding scooters, adaptive sports, swimming, dancing, or cycling
- Muscle and bone strengthening:
  - 3 days per week
  - Playing on playground equipment, climbing, tug-of war, squatting, climbing steps, or propelling wheelchair.

## Learn More

Healthy Eating for a Healthy Weight

- [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy\\_eating/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/)

Healthy Weight: Tips for Parents

- <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/children/index.html>

Physical Activity and Disability

- <http://www.ncpad.org>

Find a PT

- <http://www.apta.org/apta/findapt/index.aspx>



Please talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise program or diet with your child. A physical therapist can help you choose the right exercises to increase your child's physical activity levels.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A call to maintaining a healthy weight



## How do I know if my child is a healthy weight?

Height and weight are used to calculate a number called body mass index (BMI). A BMI greater than 95% of children of the same age and sex is often unhealthy.

## Is my child at risk?

Children with disabilities are more likely to be an unhealthy weight. It is important for your child to engage in regular physical activity and make healthy food choices.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Is your child larger around the mid-section?
- Are your child's clothes tight at the waist before they are too short?
- Does your child grow tired quickly with walking or wheelchair pushing?

## Why is my child with special needs at risk?

- Medications can add to weight gain
- Not as much physical activity due to physical limitations
- Less access to environments that allow for exercise
- Use of unhealthy foods as motivation or reward

## Why should my child maintain a healthy weight?

Avoid health risks including:

- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Cardiovascular disease (heart attack, stroke)
- Muscle, bone, and joint pain
- Social or mental health problems
- Fatty Liver Disease
- Breathing issues such as asthma or sleep apnea
- Heartburn



## What are the benefits of physical activity?

- Improved cardiovascular fitness
- Improved muscle fitness
- Improved mental health
- Increased attention and concentration
- Better ability to perform daily activities
- Strengthen bones and muscles
- Weight control