

All children (and adults too) love spending time outside. Research has shown that opportunities for physical activity several times a day helps to develop motor skills, social-emotional skills and may lead to better learning outcomes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends all children, birth to school-age, should have outdoor play **daily** and Caring For Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards recommends the following for active play while at child care:

- Two to three occasions of active play outdoors, weather permitting
- Infants (birth–12 months) should be taken outside 2 to 3 times per day, as tolerated.
- Toddlers should get at least 60 minutes
- Preschoolers through school-age should get 90 to 120 minutes

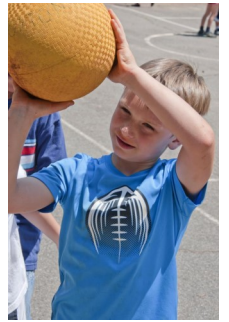


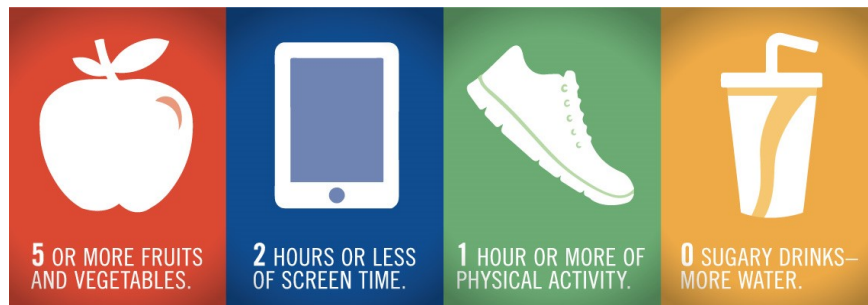
Photo CDC/Amanda Mills

Active play should include planned, adult-led physical activity (at least 30 minutes) as well as unstructured free play. Structured activities have been shown to produce higher levels of physical activity in young children, therefore it is recommended that caregivers/teachers incorporate 2 or more short, structured activities or games daily that promote physical activity.

There are many benefits of outdoor active play:

1. It invites children to learn science
2. It creates opportunities for social interaction and collaboration
3. It promotes physical health
4. It invites new contexts for learning
5. It promotes better sleep
6. It gives children a chance to take appropriate risks
7. It may lead to better learning outcomes once children return to other activities
8. It supports STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skills
9. It anchors children to the real world

Iowa’s Healthiest State Initiative 5-2-1-0 *Healthy Choices Count* prevention framework promotes healthy habits with the goal to increase physical activity and healthy eating for children. Resources are available specific for early care including tip sheets, activities and posters. Child care providers can also become a “Registered 5-2-1-0 Site” and receive additional resources and technical assistance.



Active play in the outdoors can lead to injuries. Research has shown that more than 200,000 children are injured and require medical attention from playground injuries each year across the US. Schools and child care account for approximately 40% of injuries that occur on playgrounds. Arm fractures are most often associated with a fall from playground equipment (at 43%) and brain injuries (including concussions) are associated with swings and climbing equipment. Burn injuries can also occur from playground equipment, hot surfaces and sunburns from lack of sunscreen use.

Weather safety is an important part of child care provider’s plan for outdoor time. Healthy Child Care Iowa’s *Child Care Weather Watch Poster* provides a chart for monitoring weather conditions and weather related health information, including sunscreen use for keeping children safe.

Playground safety and active supervision by child care staff is important for children to have fun and be safe when outdoors. The National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) has a *Playground Injury Prevention framework* which consists of four elements that lay the foundation for safe play areas:

- S = Supervision
- A = Appropriate Environments
- F = Fall Surfacing
- E = Equipment Maintenance

NPPS has many resources and information available for child care providers including:

- S.A.F.E.™ Information
- Playground Report Card (rate your playground)
- Kid Checker Program
- On-site and Online Training (Inspection and Supervision courses)



Photo CDC/Amanda Mills

## Additional Resources

### Websites:

- \* National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) <https://playgroundsafety.org/>
- \* Caring For Our Children (chapters 3 and 6) <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/TOC>
- \* Nemours Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/>
- \* 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count <http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/resources/individuals/5210/>
- \* Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) Playground Safety Handbook <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf>
- \* CPSC Outdoor Home Playground Safety Handbook <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/324.pdf>
- \* Healthy Child Care Iowa Child Care Weather Watch Poster <https://www.idph.iowa.gov/hcci/products>
- \* Why Outdoor Play Is Essential for Healthy Development (NAEYC) <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2019/outdoor-play-is-essential>

### Videos:

- \* Playground Safety (NPPS) <https://monkeysee.com/playground-safety/#1463592099829-ccc8a60-0557>
- \* Proper Supervision (NPPS) <https://monkeysee.com/playground-safety-proper-supervision/>
- \* Teacher-Directed Physical Activity (Evidence-based Instructional Practices for young children with autism and other disabilities) <http://ebip.vkcsites.org/teacher-directed-physical%20activity/>