



Fitness and Exercise

What is physical fitness?

Physical exercise has many benefits. The American Heart Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all children participate in some form of physical activity every day. This includes children of all ages and of all abilities. This does not mean you need to spend large sums of money for fancy sports equipment or memberships to local gyms. Physical fitness does include many activities you can do at home, such as playing catch, going up and down stairs, and walking. Fitness is about improving one's endurance, flexibility and strength through the use of physical activity.

What are the benefits of physical activity?

Regular physical activity has many proven benefits, including:

- improved heart health – By lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, exercise reduces the risk of heart disease and other medical problems such as diabetes.
- strengthened bones – Exercise assists in building strong and healthy bones.
- healthier lifestyle – Research shows that active children become active adults. Exercise helps maintain or achieve an appropriate weight.
- improved wellness – Physical exercise improves psychological well-being, gives you more energy, improves self-esteem and reduces stress.
- increased confidence
- increased strength and coordination
- enhanced learning through movement– Movement prepares us to take in information and learn. Movement stimulates growth of nerve cells.

Why is my child being referred for physical therapy?

At Kenny Kids Rehabilitation Program, our pediatric physical therapists can evaluate your child to determine his or her gross motor (large muscle) strengths and weaknesses. Our therapists will also assess your child's muscle strength, endurance, flexibility and general coordination. The physical therapist can help design a fitness program appropriate for your child. If the physical therapist determines your child is having difficulty with strength or motor coordination, he/she may recommend direct physical therapy services.

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Kenny Kids™ Pediatric Rehabilitation Program Locations

Kenny Kids – Buffalo

*Across the street from
Buffalo Hospital*
300 Catlin St., Suite 101
Buffalo, MN 55313
763-684-3888

Kenny Kids – Coon Rapids

3111 124th Ave. NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55433
763-236-7337

Kenny Kids – Owatonna

Owatonna Hospital
2250 NW 26th St.
Owatonna, MN 55060
507-977-2150



What can I do at home?

- Be a fitness role model. Try to make exercise a part of your family routine.
- Make fitness fun! Choose a variety of activities that your whole family can do together, such as walking, swimming or going for bicycle rides. You don't have to start a strict exercise routine. Instead, make changes in your daily routine to include active play.
- Maintain a positive attitude towards physical activities and exercise.
- Reduce sedentary time, such as time spent watching television, and playing video and computer games. The Centers for Disease Control found that the more time kids spend watching TV, the less time they spend being active.
- Provide motivation and encouragement for your child. The use of motivational charts to monitor progress or sticker charts for participating in activities may be helpful.
- Give a gift or reward that encourages physical activity.

How much exercise is appropriate for my child?

The American Heart Association recommends:

- All children age 2 and older should participate in at least 30 minutes of enjoyable, moderate-intensity activities each day.
- They should also perform at least 30 minutes of vigorous physical activities at least three to four days each week to achieve and maintain a good level of heart and lung fitness.
- If your child does not have a full 30-minute activity break each day, try to provide at least two 15-minute periods or three 10-minute periods in which he/she can engage in vigorous activities appropriate to age, gender and stage of physical and emotional development.

Safety considerations

- Stop exercising if you experience pain, discomfort, nausea, dizziness, light-headedness, chest pain, irregular heart beat, shortness of breath or clammy hands.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- Wear appropriate clothing.
- Remember to take slow, deep breaths and "think tall" to maintain good posture.
- All children must wear helmets when on wheeled vehicles, including bicycles, skate boards, scooter, ATVs and snowmobiles. Making this a habit early is vital.

Try these fun ideas

- Set up an obstacle course in your back yard.
- Initiate a family play time one night a week. Have kids and parents take turns choosing activities the whole family can do. Some ideas are biking, walking, going to the playground, swimming, and playing tag or catch.
- Turn on music and dance, or rent an exercise book/tape/video from the library.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT PHYSICAL FITNESS?

American Heart Association - www.americanheart.org

The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability - www.ncpad.org

The President's Challenge - www.presidentschallenge.org