

The Australian Government has worked with experts to develop guidelines to help you, as a parent or someone who cares for children, to create healthy and safe routines for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

The 24-Hour Movement Guidelines include a picture of what a child's day during a 24-hour period should look like, including active play, time spent sitting and lying down, and ideal amount of sleep.



Following the Guidelines during a child's early years is associated with better growth; stronger muscles and bones; better learning and thinking; better mental, emotional and social well-being; better motor skills; healthier weight; as well as reduced injuries.

As young children grow and develop, they need to work towards more time in active play, less time sitting and sufficient sleep each day to be healthy.

No one day will be the same, so you may use the information as a guide to help shape a child's daily activities to best support their healthy growth and development.



Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years): *An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.HEALTH.GOV.AU](http://WWW.HEALTH.GOV.AU)

NOTE: These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy infants (less than 1 year); toddlers (1–2 years); and pre-schoolers (3–5 years) irrespective of gender, cultural or language background, geographic location, or socio-economic status of the family. These guidelines may be appropriate for young children with a disability or medical condition; however, a health professional should be consulted for additional guidance.



Australian Government  
Department of Health

# GUIDELINES FOR **HEALTHY GROWTH** AND DEVELOPMENT FOR **YOUR CHILD**



## THE EARLY YEARS (BIRTH TO 5 YEARS)

Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years): *An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep*



## GENERAL ADVICE

Have fun! Move and play every day!

Don't be restricted by your environment – you can be safe and active in all seasons, in all weather, indoors, and outdoors. Remember play can involve other children, adults or the child alone.

Encourage children to try a range of activities including obstacle courses (for walkers, crawlers or shufflers!), tips, hide and seek, dancing and skipping. Practice activities like catching, kicking or throwing, but remember, slower paced activities such as puzzles, painting, water play, singing or craft are just as important.

## WHAT ABOUT SLEEP?



Sleep is essential for a healthy child: a well-rested child is an active child, and an active child is a well-rested child.

Sleep can be assisted through developing healthy hygiene patterns in the early years, including consistent bedtimes and wake up times, as well as calming bedtime routines.

## BABIES (INFANTS) UNDER 1 YEAR OF AGE

- **Physical activity:** Being physically active several times a day in a variety of ways, particularly through supervised interactive floor-based play, including crawling; more is better. For those not yet mobile, this includes at least 30 minutes of tummy time, which includes reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling, spread throughout the day while awake;
- **Sedentary behaviour:** Not being restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g., in a stroller, car seat or high chair). Screen time is not recommended. When sedentary, engaging in pursuits such as reading, singing, puzzles and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged; and
- **Sleep:** 14 to 17 hours (for those aged 0–3 months) and 12 to 16 hours (for those aged 4–11 months) of good quality sleep, including naps.

## TODDLERS (1–2 YEARS)

- **Physical activity:** At least 180 minutes spent in a variety of physical activities, including energetic play, spread throughout the day; more is better;
- **Sedentary behaviour:** Not being restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g., in a stroller, car seat or high chair) or sitting for extended periods. For those younger than 2 years, sedentary screen time is not recommended. For those aged 2 years, sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better. When sedentary, engaging in pursuits such as reading, singing, puzzles and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged; and
- **Sleep:** 11 to 14 hours of good quality sleep, including naps, with consistent sleep and wake-up times.

**TIP!** Getting the right amount of sleep, and replacing time spent sitting with more energetic play, can provide greater health benefits.

## PRE-SCHOOLERS (3–5 YEARS)

- **Physical activity:** At least 180 minutes spent in a variety of physical activities, of which at least 60 minutes is energetic play, spread throughout the day; more is better;
- **Sedentary behaviour:** Not being restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g., in a stroller or car seat) or sitting for extended periods. Sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better. When sedentary, engaging in pursuits such as reading, singing, puzzles and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged; and
- **Sleep:** 10 to 13 hours of good quality sleep, which may include a nap, with consistent sleep and wake-up times.

If you're not sure where to begin, don't worry, you don't have to change everything within a day. Begin to add more movement, engaging quiet play and sleep over time.

While changing a routine may seem difficult, parents can make positive changes, gradually helping their child to be healthier, happier, smarter and stronger.

**TIP!** Unsupervised use of screens while a child is sedentary for long periods of time, can lead to language delays, reduced attention spans, lower levels of school readiness and poorer decision-making. This is due to the child's reduced social



interaction with parents and carers. Quality sedentary behaviour like reading, storytelling and puzzles support healthier growth and development.