



The Active Toddler

Physical activity is important for children of all ages. Of course, it may seem that your own toddler gets all the exercise he needs as he's constantly on the move from sunup to bedtime. He's crawling, walking, learning to run and jump, climbing onto and down from furniture without help, and kicking a ball or pulling toys behind him while walking.

By 2 to 3 years of age, your child's physical activity will move to even more challenging levels. As his coordination keeps improving, he'll be able to walk up and down stairs. He'll run easily and start learning to pedal a tricycle. With his short attention span, he may be moving from one activity to the next, almost minute by minute, keeping you on the run just to stay up with him.



We can't overemphasize how important this active play is. To encourage it in your toddler, you should be discouraging him from watching TV. The AAP believes strongly that children up to 2 years should not be watching any TV, choosing instead to participate in supervised physical activity outdoors and indoors. Encourage them to play with siblings or other children their own age. When planning family activities, make them as active as possible.

You can also promote physical activity (</English/healthy-living/fitness/pages/Encouraging-Your-Child-to-be-Physically-Active.aspx>) by using the stroller judiciously. When you're out for a walk, don't automatically sit your toddler in the stroller for the entire trip. Let him get out and walk beside you if that's what he wants to do.

If your toddler attends child care, find out how active he is there. In too many child care settings, the TV set and not the kids gets a real workout during the day. Safety should also be a big concern while your toddler is in the child care setting whether he's playing or eating. Request that he always be seated while being fed, rather than running around with food in his mouth on which he could end up choking (</English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Choking-Prevention.aspx>).

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Source A Parent's Guide to Childhood Obesity: A Road Map to Health (Copyright © 2006 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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