

NEW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

In September 2019, the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland published a new set of guidelines for physical activity in the UK. These update the 2011 guidelines for all ages and draw on new evidence for specific groups, such as disabled people and pregnant women. This summary highlights their key messages and changes relating to children and young people.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"In children and young people, regular physical activity is associated with improved **learning and attainment**, better **mental health** and cardiovascular **fitness**, also contributing to **healthy weight** status."

"Our understanding of the relationship between physical activity and health has grown. In general, the more time spent being physically active, the greater the health benefits. However, we now know that **even relatively small increases in physical activity can contribute to improved health and quality of life**. As such, although we recommend that all individuals work towards achieving these guidelines, they are not absolute thresholds and we recognise the benefits that can be achieved at levels both above and below the thresholds."

"...we did not feel the 2011 recommendations on strengthening activities were given the merit they deserve. In childhood, **strengthening activities help to develop muscle strength and build healthy bones**, while in adults and older adults they help to maintain strength and delay the natural decline in muscle mass and bone density which occurs from around 50 years of age."

"The report also highlights the risks of inactivity and sedentary behaviour for health... In all groups, the relationships of sedentary behaviour and health occur independently of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for some health outcomes. **Prolonged sitting is harmful**, even in people who achieve the recommended levels of MVPA."

"These new guidelines allow greater flexibility for how and when children and young people can achieve the recommended levels of physical activity across the week. Contrary to 2011, the

current evidence does not support a specific minimum daily threshold of 60 minutes of MVPA for health benefits, and instead recommends an **average number of 60 daily minutes to be achieved across the week**."

"Evidence now demonstrates that there is **no minimum amount of physical activity** required to achieve some health benefits. The previous requirement for a 10-minute bout of activity is no longer valid and is no longer included. However, specific targets – such as aiming to do at least 10 minutes at a time – can be effective as a behavioural goal for people starting from low levels of activity."

CALL TO ACTION

"Despite the widely reported benefits of physical activity, **most adults and many children across the UK are insufficiently active** to meet the full set of recommendations. We want this report to act as a catalyst for a change in our attitudes to physical activity."

"We want as many people as possible to make use of these guidelines to work towards and achieve the recommended activity levels. We hope these guidelines help all individuals to become more active. The good news is that even small changes can make a big difference over time. As we say in these guidelines: **some is good, more is better**."

To read the full guidelines and download the new infographics, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report> ■

This article was compiled by the editor using the Open Government Licence document: UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019).

SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Pre-schoolers (aged 3-4 years) should spend **at least 180 minutes (three hours) per day** in a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play. More is better; the 180 minutes should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.

Children and young people (aged 5-18 years) should engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an **average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week**. This can include all forms of activity such as physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports.

Children and young people should engage in a **variety of types and intensities** of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness and bone strength.

Children and young people should aim to **minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary**, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity.

NB. This section does not include specific recommendations for disabled children and young people. The CMOs recognise that specific guidelines need to be developed for this group. There are guidelines for disabled adults.

"Physical education is likely to play a key role in the development of movement skills and supporting the promotion of high-quality physical education provision is therefore important for the development of children's skills and confidence to be physically active."

Physical activity for children and young people (5 – 18 Years)



BUILDS
CONFIDENCE &
SOCIAL SKILLS



DEVELOPS
CO-ORDINATION



IMPROVES
CONCENTRATION
& LEARNING



STRENGTHENS
MUSCLES
& BONES



IMPROVES
HEALTH
& FITNESS



MAINTAINS
HEALTHY
WEIGHT



IMPROVES
SLEEP



MAKES
YOU FEEL
GOOD

Be physically active

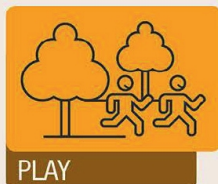
Spread activity
throughout
the day

Aim for an
average of at least

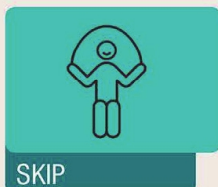
60

minutes per day
across week

All activities
should make you
breathe faster
& feel warmer



Activities to
develop
movement
skills, and
muscle and
bone strength
**ACROSS
WEEK**



Get strong



Move more

Find ways to help all children and young people accumulate an average of at least 60 minutes physical activity per day across the week

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019