Physical Activity for Your Child: Age 6, 7, & 8 Years

Daily physical activity is important for your child’s physical and mental development. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and leading health and fitness organizations all agree that children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day for good health. Children can reach this goal by being active for 10 minutes 6 times throughout the day, 15 minutes 4 times a day, or any other combination of active time periods that brings the total to 60 minutes or more for the day. The best activities are those that your child enjoys and does regularly and safely.

Age-Appropriate Goals
- Improve basic skills, like kicking, throwing, catching, jumping
- Develop and improve eye-hand coordination
- Improve balance
- Begin to understand and follow rules
- Organized sports play should have flexible rules, short instruction time, and a focus on fun

Activities to try
- Badminton  
  Kickball and other ball games
- Basketball  
  Roller skating (4 wheels)
- Bicycle  
  Soccer
- Bowling (gutter ball)  
  Swim
- Dance – ballet, tap, freestyle, other  
  Tag
- Golf  
  T-ball, softball, wiffle ball
- Gymnastics/tumbling  
  Tennis
- Hula hoop  
  Walking briskly
- Jump rope  
  Yoga

Other ways to be active
- Household chores: dust, vacuum, take out trash, make bed
- Yard chores: rake leaves, gardening (digging, planting, hoeing, weeding), picking up sticks, hauling, shovel snow
- Play in sand, snow, leaves (watch out for ticks),
- Walk to school, to friend’s house, to the playground
- Hopscotch, pogo stick,

Avoid activities with high risk of serious injury
For safety reasons, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following:
- All-terrain vehicles (2-, 3-, and 4-wheeled unlicensed motor vehicles) should not be used by children under 16 years old.
- Scooters should not be used by children under 8 years old.
- Skateboards should not be used by children under 10 years old without close supervision.
- Trampolines should never be used at home.
Other tips to support an active lifestyle:

- Limit screen time (TV, computer, hand-held games, etc.) to no more than 2 hours a day.
- Make sure your child has a pair of proper fitting sneakers or footwear appropriate for the physical activity that your child is doing.
- Make sure your child wears protective sports gear appropriate for the activity, like a helmet, knee/elbow pads, shin guards, etc. Remember sunscreen for skin protection.
- Keep games and sporting equipment organized and easy to reach.
- When buying gifts, choose active games and age-appropriate fitness equipment, like bicycles, rollerskates, balls, bats, mitts, jump ropes, hoola hoops, frisbees, and dance music CDs.
- Seek medical advice if your child is limping after exercise, has muscle soreness that lasts throughout the day or night, or any other activity-related injury. Getting help sooner rather than later might allow a quicker return to activity.
- Be an advocate for high quality physical education in your child’s school.
- Together with your child, explore different parks. Call Lancaster General Wellness Center at 717-544-3811 for a free copy of Lancaster on the Move!, a guide to parks and other free or low cost recreation opportunities in Lancaster County.
- Find activities that you enjoy and can do regularly to set a good example for your child.
- Make time for your whole family to be active together...play! Block out time on your calendar if that’s the only way to ensure it. Try different activities and make handy list of ones that your family really enjoys. Aim for at least 5 indoor and 5 outdoor activities.

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References and Resources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Healthy Youth, Physical activity Web site: 
   http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/index.htm
2. American Academy of Pediatrics, Children’s Health Topics, Physical Activity Web site: 
   http://aap.org/healthtopics/phsact.cfm, provides links to numerous resources
5. Games Kids Play Web site: www.gameskidsplay.net