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Keeping Children Moving, Active, and Healthy. HEF609, Participant Guide

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Nebraska Lincoln EXTENSION
Know how. Know now.

HEF609
Participant Guide

Keeping Children Moving, Active, and Healthy

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Lesson Goal:

This program introduces parents, caregivers and other adults to fun, interactive, and simple ways to encourage at-home movement activities with children birth to age 8.

Lesson Objectives:

After completing this lesson, you will:

- have an increased understanding of the health benefits to children and adults of at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.
- understand how movement activities support children's academic success, and social and emotional development.
- learn new strategies for helping children stay active and healthy.

Find fun, simple and age appropriate activities in these activity guides:

Let's Move It, Move It!

Everyday Activities in the Home

Let's Move Outside

Introduction

According to the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity (2010):

- One in five children are overweight or obese by the time of their fifth birthday.
- Over one-half of obese children are overweight at or before age 2.

As a result of these statistics, movement education has received national attention because of its potential health benefits.



Participating in physical activities as a family helps children learn that exercise is a fun part of life.

Active children grow into active adults. The American Heart Association recommends that children over age 2 engage in at least one hour of moderate, enjoyable physical activity each day. Staying active and healthy as young children decreases the risk for diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and other health problems in adulthood.

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This lesson will share several ideas on how you can help the child in your life stay active and healthy.

Safety First

When creating experiences for children that encourage movement and a healthy, active lifestyle, it is important to follow safety precautions.

Ages and Stages NebGuide Series

Ages and Stages: Infact (0-12 Months)

Ages and Stages: Toddler (12-24 Months)

Ages and Stages: 2- and 3-Year-Olds

Ages and Stages: 3-, 4- and 5-Year Olds

- For outdoor play and activities, always provide protective equipment such as helmets, wrist pads, and kneepads.
- Know the physical signs indicating children have become overly exerted. If a child becomes fatigued by a physical activity, such as playing the Sleeping Giants game described in the "Let's Move It, Move It!" handout, redirect them to a less intense version of the activity, or to a different activity altogether.
- Be sure the movement activity is age appropriate. For information on developmental stages and principles of physical development, refer to the Ages and Stages NebGuide series or the "Let's Move Outside!" handout.
- Don't forget about infants! Babies also need to be active. Adult supervised free play on their tummies in open and safe places encourages infants to touch, explore, and feel the world around them.

Keeping Children Active

We know that children who are physically active and develop basic motor skills are more likely to become healthy adults. Encouraging physical activity in the home and during outdoor play helps children:

- explore their world,
- improve their balance and coordination,
- enhance their thinking skills, and
- develop an "I can do it" attitude.

Resources

Learn more about the health benefits of physical activity, and get ideas for helping children stay active and healthy.

- Early Childhood Development from University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension: *www.extension.unl.edu/web/child*
- Fun To Play Ready to Learn Activity Guide *http://marketplace.unl.edu/extension/eb2.html*
- Ages and Stages: 6 years old through 18 years old (PDF) *http://4h.unl.edu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=ac2c9a3c-733b-440d-945b-f568e2883e4c&groupId=466759&.pdf*
- PBS Parents: Healthy Reading for Kids *www.pbs.org/parents/food-and-fitness/sport-and-fitness/healthy-reading-for-kids/*
- Let's Move! *www.letsmove.gov/*
- Head Start, Body Smart Online Learning *www.aahperd.org/headstartbodystart/onlinelearning*
- CDC Parent Portal *www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/basics.html*
- American Heart Association Healthier Kids *www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/HealthierKids/Healthier-Kids_UCM_304156_SubHomePage.jsp*
- The Naturel Principle: Richard Louv *richardlouv.com/*
- Seniors for Kids: Nebraska Early Childhood Grandparent Network *www.seniors4kids.org/OURWORK/OurStates/Nebraska.aspx*

HEF 609
Keeping Children Moving, Active, and Healthy

Let's Move Outside!

Research overwhelmingly supports the need for children to experience natural environments often and in a variety of ways.

Children who play outdoors regularly:

- maintain or achieve a healthy body weight,
- develop stronger immune systems,
- have more active imaginations;
- have lower stress levels;
- play more creatively; and
- have greater respect for themselves and others.



Outdoor play promotes creativity while helping children avoid weight and other health-related problems.

In addition, daily experiences in the outdoors promote and strengthen learning and development. And, natural environments have a calming effect that helps children be more focused and less distracted.

Within the last decade, a large body of research has examined how the natural world influences development and learning. This research has linked several health and learning issues in children — and adults — to a lack of engaging in regular experiences in the natural world.

Let's consider some of the consequences:

- Two out of every 10 children in the United States are clinically obese. These rates have quadrupled in the last three decades.
- There has been a large increase in the use of behavioral medications for young children, with the largest increase (66 percent) in the use of antidepressants for preschoolers.
- Prescription drug use for the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has skyrocketed.
- In the last decade, the appearance of socially inappropriate behaviors in children and their difficulty in relating to others has become glaringly apparent.

Without a doubt, research suggests a need for us to play more, move more, and connect with nature.

Back

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Check out the following video clips to learn more about the benefits and importance of outdoor play and connecting children with nature.



The Importance of Outdoor Play—Let's Talk, Part 1



How do we get our children outdoors? Let's Talk, Part 2



Play Outdoors

Play Equals Learning

Children can play anywhere and with anything, but the world of nature is an especially inviting place for play.

Parents who participate in their child's outdoor play experience can help the child develop math, language, and even science skills (*Table I*). For example, math skills develop when a child learns to count the number of ants on the ground, language skills develop when a child learns the name of a new animal, and science skills develop when a child gets to see how a rainbow forms after it rains.

Adults must be actively involved in teaching children about nature safety in order to ensure a good experience. For instance, adults may warn younger kids not to play with sharp objects or not to eat something they picked up from the ground. They may teach older children how to "skip" a rock across water to add value to the experience of playing near water.

Vary Outdoor Settings

Children should be allowed to go outside every day. The length of time spent playing outdoors depends on the child and the number of children out playing. Some children may have to learn how to play outside and that it's OK to get dirty, while others may catch on quickly and spend hours exploring.

Provide children the chance to play in a variety of outdoor spaces — different settings will inspire different kinds of play. These places don't have to be far from home or your community. Parks provide ample opportunities for kids to connect to nature. Even spending time watching squirrels and birds in one's own backyard is educational.



Parents can use outdoor play time to help their children develop key developmental skills.

Table I. Activities to help the young child in your life move, play, learn, and stay active outdoors

Ages 0-2	
Activity	**Skill Developed** *http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/ELG/B_3_English.PDF*
Play with balls outside (multiple sizes, colors, and textures)	Large and fine motor skills
Tickle the feet with grass or nature items	Language and literacy Social emotional Science Approaches
Play with bubbles	Health/physical development Social/emotional Science Literacy
Play in sprinklers, mud, or snow	Health/physical development Social emotional Science Literacy



Ages 3-5	
Activity	**Skill Developed** *http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/ELG/3_5_English.PDF*
Fly a kite	Health/physical development Social/emotional Science Literacy
Take a nature walk and talk about the things seen and/or collect things for a collage	Health/physical development Social emotional Science Literacy
Go to the park, hunt for bugs, make a mud pie, build sand castles, create designs with sidewalk chalk	Social emotional Science Literacy Physical development
Star gaze, bird watch, cloud watch	Language development
Use spray bottles filled with water colored with food coloring to decorate a snow drift.	Science Physical development



Ages 5-8		
Activity	**Skill Developed**	
Nature rubbings—use paper and crayons to rub over a nature item	Physical health Science	
Play hide-and-seek or play ball	Physical health Social studies	
Build a nature collage and engage in nature photography (take pictures of nature, including animals and insects in their natural habitats)	Science Language arts	
Go on a scavenger hunt: leaf, rock, weed, ant, star shape, heart shape, color, etc.	Physical health Science	
Make paintbrushes from pine needles and a stick, and "paint" on the sidewalk with water.	Physical health Development	
Plant a flower or vegetable garden	Physical development Science Social studies	
Play in snow (make a snowman or angel); write on frosted widows;	Physical development Language arts	
Go to the park, make a mud pie, fish, build sand castles, create designs and poems with sidewalk chalk	Physical health Language arts Science	

Let's Move It, Move It!
Everyday Activities in the Home Activity Guide

According to the National Association for Sports and Physical Education, children should accumulate at least **60 minutes** of physical activity daily.

The development of gross (large) motor skills, fine (small) motor skills, and self-help skills is a critical part of the development for young children. These skills are essential for the successful achievement of developmental milestones. They also serve as a foundation for the development of future academic skills such as reading and writing.

The following are examples you can use to help encourage the large and small skill development of children in the home, while also helping children get needed physical activity.



Never leave a baby unattended around a deflated or partially inflated beach ball.

Infants

Beach Ball Activity

Beach balls are fun, inexpensive, and versatile. Keep one in your purse or diaper bag for those moments when you need a game or activity. Just quickly blow it up and have a fun diversion for you and your baby.

A partially inflated beach ball is good for infant stimulation. Lay or sit the infant on the partially inflated ball, and move the baby around on the ball, changing positions frequently.

Toddlers

Dance with Color!

Using items such as scarves or ribbons is an excellent way to encourage children to appreciate music, explore dance, and become involved in healthy physical activity at home.

Place in a basket fabric pieces such as a colorful string, scarves, or ribbons. Then, pull out your favorite music selections along with music the child may be familiar with. The music can range from age appropriate urban dance or classical music to silly animal songs. Choose music based on the game, level of physical activity the child(ren) will engage in, and personal taste.

Turn on the music, grab a scarf and enjoy dancing to the beat with the toddler!

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Fingerplay Fun

Developing a child's hand coordination and strength leads to their ability to use scissors, pencils, markers, puzzles, string beads, and fasten their clothes. It is important that toddlers practice using their small muscles to help develop their fine motors skills. This activity helps develop toddlers' fine motor skills, and aids in listening and lanugage skill development.

As you say the words below, make appropriate actions to fit the words. For example, for glasses, join the thumb and forefinger on each hand and hole over your eyes. Use a higher voice for grandmother and a deeper voice for grandfather.

- Grandmother's glasses
- This is Grandmother's hat
- Grandmother claps her hands like this
- And folds them in her lap

- These are Grandfather's glasses
- This is Grandfather's hat
- This is the way he folds his arms
- And has a little nap

(Source: *http://fun.familyeducation.com/toddler/activity/36943.html#ixzz2YdRRPeo7*)

Preschool

Sleeping Giants

An important skill for preschoolers to learn is how to listen, understand, and follow simple and multiple-step directions. Sleeping Giants is an activity that will help develop these skills and promote physical activity.

To start, find an open space in the home that allows you to engage in movement such as lying on the floor, jumping, and walking in a small circle.

Have the child practice jumping up and down. When you say "sleeping giants," the child will stop and lay very still on the floor. When you say "waking giants" the child will continue jumping up and down until you call out "sleeping giants," when, again, the child stops to lie on the floor.

Continue the activity so the child can practice stopping and starting. Substitute gross motor skills other than jumping, such as walking in a circle, marching, or hopping on one leg. Take this activity outside if possible to allow the child to practice hopping, skipping, running, and galloping. The child will think it is fun that you are being active too! Change it up a little and you pretend to be the sleeping and waking giant!

(Source: Head Start, Body Smart)



Obstacle courses help children develop motor skills

Obstacle Course

Create an obstacle course in your home. Arrange hula hoops, traffic cones, pool noodles, and other items to create the course. You can demonstrate as well as call out directions to the preschooler such as "Put both hands in the middle of the hula hoops," "Make a figure eight around the traffic cones," or "Hop over the pool noodles."

This activity can be used for physical exercise as well as supporting listening skills, enhancing vocabulary, and following directions — all key skills needed for kindergarten readiness.

Kindergarten to Third Grade

It is critical to promote a healthy and active lifestyle for the school age child. For many reasons, children are spending more time inside the house watching television and playing video games. Many schools are cutting recess times or eliminating recess all together in favor of spending more time focusing on academic skills.

The following activities are age appropriate, fun, and help older children stay active and healthy each day!

As If!

"As If" is an activity that doesn't require any equipment. Children should act out each sentence for 20 to 30 seconds. They may create their own sentences for additional activities.

- Jog in place as if a big scary bear is chasing you.
- Walk forward as if you're walking through chocolate pudding.
- Jump in place as if you are popcorn popping.
- Reach up as if grabbing balloons out of the air.
- March in place and play the drums as if you are in a marching band.
- Paint as if the paint brush is attached to your head.
- Swim as if you are in a giant pool of gelatin.
- Move your feet on the floor as if you are ice skating.
- Shake your body as if you are a wet dog.

(Source: *http://www.ecu.edu/cs-hhp.exss/upload/Energizers_for_Grades_K_2.pdf*)

Space Jam



Interactive stories allow children to participate by acting out parts of the story.

"Space Jam" is an interactive story that helps children learn about verbs or "action" words while being active. Read the following story and pause at each boldfaced verb, so the school age child can act it out for 15 to 20 seconds.

Hello, my name is Zippy and I live on a space station. Today, I will lead you on a tour through space. First, we need to **put on** your moon boots. They will allow us to **walk** through space.

The first stop will be Mercury, the closest planet to the sun. Mercury is very hot — OUCH — be careful and **step quickly** so your feet do not get burned. Mercury also has many craters. On the count of 3, let's **jump** into a crater and **see** what we find. 1-2-3, **JUMP**! **Climb** out of the crater so we can **march** to Venus.

Venus is the second planet from the sun. This plant has very strong winds and volcanoes. See if you can **walk** through the wind without blowing over. A lot of the surface of Venus is covered with lava, and here comes some… **RUN**!

The next stop is Earth, the third planet from the sun. Seventy-one percent of the Earth's surface is water, so **hop** in and start **swimming**. See if you can do the **front crawl** and the **backstroke.** Our next stop will be Mars.

Mars is known as the red planet. The largest mountain in space, Olympic Mons, is located on mars. See if you can **climb** to the top!

Jupiter is the fifth planet from the sun. It is made up of mostly gas and you can see clouds when you look at this planet. **Find** a cloud and see if you can **float** on it.

Our next stop is Saturn, the sixth planet from the sun. It has a rocky core and there are areas of ice throughout the planet. There are also rings of gases around Saturn. WHOA, there is a huge piece of ice, **be careful** and **slide** across it. **Hop** on one of the rings surrounding Saturn and **spin** around in circles.

Uranus is our next stop. It has a small rocky core. Can everyone **tiptoe** across Uranus **watching** out for the ice?

Next, let's visit Neptune. Neptune has four rings and large storms with fast winds. It also has 13 moons. Quick, **duck**! Here comes a moon, **move to the left** so you do not get hit.

Pluto is our next stop. It is the smallest planet and is furthest from the sun. It is a cold planet because it is furthest from the sun. **Shiver** and **rub** your hands together to stay warm.

This ends our tour of space. **Grab** a partner and **hop** back to the space station.

(Source: http://blockphed4650.wiki.westga.edu/file/view/Space+Jam+Energizer.pdf)

Sports Galore

"Sports Galore" does not require any equipment, just a child's movement and creativity. Call out different sports skills for the children to mimic for 30 seconds each:

- Shooting a jump shot
- Running through tires
- Batting a baseball
- Serving a tennis ball
- Downhill skiing
- Spiking a volleyball
- Swinging a golf club
- Throwing a football
- Juggling a soccer ball

(Source: http://www.ecu.edu/cs-heep/exss/upload/Energizers_for_grades_K_2.pdf)

Explore Nebraska Activity

"Explore Nebraska" is an interactive tour of Nebraska. Add movements that correspond with monuments or well-known areas in your county. Have the child move at least 30 seconds for each of these:

- Flex your muscles like Husker football players.
- Run up the stairs at Memorial Stadium.
- Swim at Branched Oak Lake.
- Skip through the Henry Doorly Zoo.
- Climb an oak tree.
- Hit a homerun at Haymarket Park.
- Pick corn from the fields.
- March across the Kearney Archway.
- Climb Chimney Rock.
- Go fishing at Holmes Lake.

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