

# Exercising in childhood & adolescence (5-17 years)



**Goal: set foundations and build lifelong movement skills**



## Why exercise matters for children and adolescents

Childhood and adolescence represent a critical period for developing motor skills, bone density, cardiovascular fitness, and long-term physical activity habits. Regular physical activity during these years supports healthy growth and development, improves mental wellbeing, and reduces the risk of chronic disease later in life. It's when our relationship with exercise starts!

Evidence suggests that children who are physically active are more likely to remain active as adults, supporting long-term health outcomes (World Health Organization, 2020).

## Recommended activity levels

Children and adolescents should aim for:

- At least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily
- Muscle and bone strengthening activities at least 3 days per week

(Canada.ca, 2026).

## Exercises to prioritise

### Movement skill development

- Running
- Jumping
- Throwing/Catching/Kicking
- Coordination and agility

### Bone and muscle development

- Climbing
- Gymnastics
- Jumping and impact-based sport (basketball)

### Cardiorespiratory fitness

- Cycling
- Swimming
- School sport

**The best exercise is the one the child enjoys (creativity is great here!)**

## Exercise physiologist expert insight

Gaining confidence and enjoyment during childhood exercise significantly increases the likelihood of maintaining an active lifestyle into adulthood. Exercise is meant to be fun – not a chore!