

Keeping Children Active during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Exercise
is Medicine®

AMERICAN COLLEGE
of SPORTS MEDICINE®

Schools and community centers are closed. Sports leagues are suspended. Children are home all day. How can parents keep their children active during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic — and maintain their sanity?

To prevent getting COVID-19, it's vital to take steps to protect yourself, your family and others. We should all follow recommendations around social distancing, hand washing, not touching our faces, etc. Social distancing means staying 6 feet away from others outside your home (or anyone in your home who is sick). It's also important to stay active. Physical activity boosts the immune system, promotes health, and relieves stress. Being active can decrease behavior problems in children and help them concentrate better on their schoolwork.

The most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and children can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/children.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/children.html)

Physical Activity Guidelines in a Nutshell

Ages 3-5:

Preschool-aged children should be active for a total of 3 hours each day at different intensities: light, moderate or vigorous.



Ages 6-12:

Kids need 60 minutes of physical activity every day. This includes activity for their hearts, muscles, and bones. Exercise should be vigorous on 3 days of the week. Children can do 5 or 10 minutes several times a day or play for 30-60 minutes once or twice. Every active minute counts!



Make family time active time!
Schedule movement breaks and active play into your daily routine.

COVID-19 Questions:

What about play dates?

To meet social distancing recommendations, in-person play dates are discouraged. Other options include visiting a friend's house by saying hello from the street and "virtual" play dates in online forums such as Zoom.

What about things kids touch during activity?

Balls, bats, jump ropes, bicycles, etc.? These items should not be shared outside of the family. Wash hands often and wipe down items after use if they are visibly dirty or a child is sick.

Can a child who is infected be physically active?

Physical activity is okay when your child is sick as long as they are comfortable and interested. Avoid vigorous activity if they are ill with a fever. A sick child should drink lots of fluids and rest as needed.

What if one of my children tested positive — can they still play with their brothers and sisters?

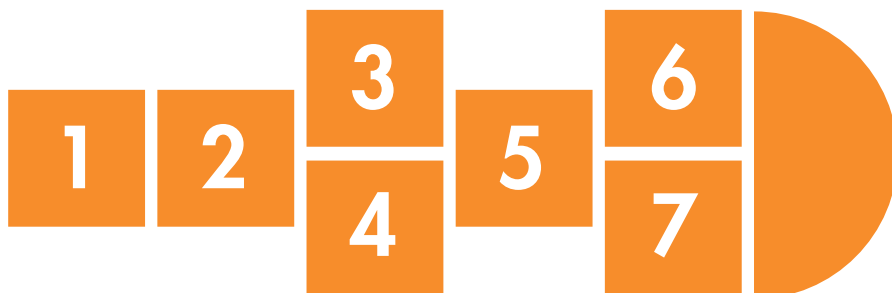
If anyone in the family is feeling sick or may have COVID-19, it is best to isolate them as much as possible to decrease the risk of spreading it to other family members. Healthy children tend to have mild symptoms, but others may be at risk for more severe illness.



Indoor Options

- Active gaming and online resources to get kids moving:
 - Yoga: cosmickids.com/category/watch/ (Go on yoga adventures)
 - Active indoor videos: family.gonoodle.com (short, fun videos to dance and move to)
 - Active fun for Families/Social Distancing: openphysed.org/activeschools/activehome (Many activity ideas and lesson plans)
 - American Heart Association "25 Ways to Get Moving at Home": heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/25-ways-to-get-moving-at-home-infographic

- Have a dance party! Let the kids be the DJ and take turns showing off your best dance moves.
- Go on a color hunt! Hide colorful objects around the house and have kids bring back the color you name. They can run, jump, swim, skip, crawl or dance to the color.
- Nerf basketball, indoor obstacle courses, paper plate badminton (use paper plates to bat at balloons).
- Martial arts — karate, judo (also works outside)
- Instant recess to break up sitting time — everyone gets up and does jumping jacks or marching or something silly for a few minutes several times a day.



Outdoor Options (if permitted and available)

Kids who play outside move more, feel better and are able to use their five senses to explore and create.



Backyard Ideas and Games:

- Kids can do anything active in the backyard if it's with their siblings. Set up a soccer goal. Play tag or dodge ball. Try jump rope or double-dutch.
- Other active games:
 - Obstacle course
 - Hide and Seek
 - Egg hunt (Hide plastic eggs or other plastic toys and have kids search for them — also works indoors!)



Outdoor Activities in a Park or the Neighborhood:

Remember to stay 6 feet away from others and have everyone wash their hands when they get home.

- Walk or run. Make it fun! Have a contest to see who can get there first. Play "I Spy." Sing songs.
- Go on a "no touch" scavenger hunt. Look for different colors, shapes, animals (dog, cat, squirrel, birds, etc.) or other items (garden hose, statue, numbers, bicycles).
- Ride a bicycle, skateboard, or scooter on a bike path, in an empty school or church parking lot, or through the neighborhood. Children can learn bike safety while exploring.
- Practice drills (for any sport) to help young athletes stay sharp and develop their skills. Avoid games where it's easy to break the 6-foot closeness rule.
- Explore the trails at a local park. Nature can help relieve stress and strengthen the immune system.
- Walk the dog every day as a family. The pooch needs to get out of the house too!



Play as a family. **Make it fun. Be smart and safe.**