

Health-Enhancing Physical Activity in children and adolescents

Recommendations for Switzerland



Aim of recommendations

The recommendations below are specifications for developing and assessing movement-oriented, health-enhancing activities. They do not constitute direct instructions for adopting, structuring and maintaining a personal physical activity regime. For additional information, please refer to the section entitled «Implementing the recommendations».

Basic recommendations for health-enhancing physical activity

As soon as they are born, children should be encouraged to move their body and afforded the opportunity to engage in various forms of physical exertion. From a health-related perspective, it is recommended that children and adolescents of school age engage daily in moderate to high-intensity physical activity in addition to their routine activities. Basic recommendations based on current findings:

- Adolescents who have reached the end of school age should perform at least one hour of moderate to high-intensity physical activity per day.
- Younger children should engage in significantly more than one hour of physical activity per day.

Eine mittlere Intensität weisen körperliche Aktivitäten auf, bei denen man zumindest etwas ausser Atem kommt. Zügiges Gehen, Velofahren oder Inlineskating sowie Spielen in A

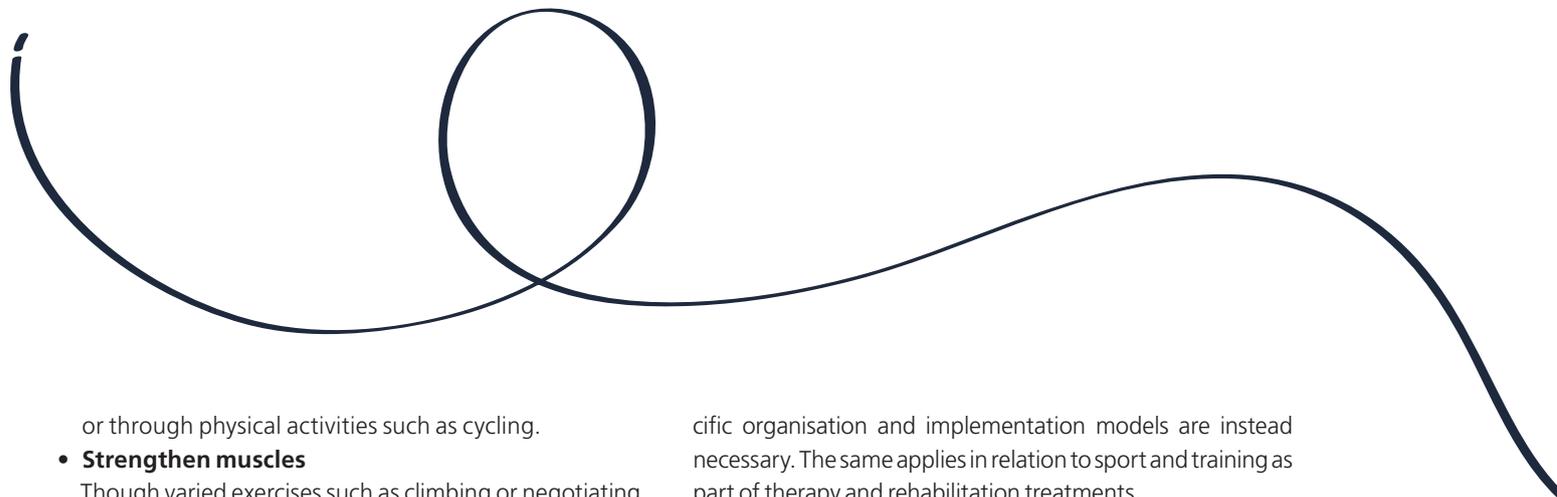
moderate intensity level relates to physical activities in which the individual gets a little out of breath. Brisk walking, cycling, inline skating and playing games outside are examples of moderate-intensity physical exertion, as are many other leisure and sports activities.

High-intensity activities include all movement-intensive sports and activities that cause sweating and accelerated breathing, such as jogging, mountain biking, swimming, ball games and street dance. It is possible to achieve the recommended targets during PE lessons and other school activities, on the journey to school, at home with family and friends, and during leisure time, e.g. sports clubs, playing outside.

Undertaking a varied range of physical activities and sports

A varied range of physical activities and sports is necessary for children and adolescents to grow up in the best possible health. Children and adolescents should therefore engage several times a week in activities that:

- **Build strong bones**
Through weight-bearing and strength-building activities such as running, hopping, jumping, e.g. while playing games.
- **Stimulate the cardiovascular system**
Through endurance sports activities such as jogging, swimming or cross-country skiing; in the form of games



or through physical activities such as cycling.

- **Strengthen muscles**

Though varied exercises such as climbing or negotiating climbing frames or hanging ropes, through exercises involving the person's own body weight, or – for adolescents who are sufficiently instructed – a targeted programme of strength training.

- **Improve agility (coordination)**

Through a varied programme of sports training as well as specific games and sports exercises.

- **Maintain flexibility**

Through a varied programme of sports training as well as specific games and sports exercises.

In particular, there is a whole range of sporting activities offering more than one of the aforementioned health benefits respectively. Time spent practising a variety of physical activities or sports can be included as part of a person's minimum daily recommended physical activity regime. Performed in an age-appropriate manner, such activities also help to expand the individual's movement repertoire, provide enjoyment and contribute to people having a positive attitude towards physical activity and sport for the rest of their lives.

Avoiding long periods of inactivity

The ability to sit still and concentrate on one particular thing at a time is important and must be taught over the course of a person's development. However, activities that involve excessively long periods of sitting down can become a health risk, especially when combined with the consumption of energy-rich food (e.g. eating snacks while watching television). It is therefore recommended that individuals avoid long periods of physical inertia as much as possible or that they punctuate such periods lasting around two hours or longer with active stints of physical activity.

The varied benefits of physical activity and sport

Content-wise, the recommendations cover the most important effects on physical health. However, physical activity and sport have additional psychological and social effects, particularly in terms of regulating stress, strengthening self-esteem, improving cognitive ability, facilitating social integration and promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. It is not possible to depict these effects via the requisite diagram. Spe-

cific organisation and implementation models are instead necessary. The same applies in relation to sport and training as part of therapy and rehabilitation treatments.

Whereas in the case of most children and adolescents the focus is on ensuring sufficient physical activity, the training load needs to be adjusted to levels of fitness and physical development in the case of youth elite sports practitioners. Adequate recovery time also needs to be scheduled accordingly and nutrition adapted to the individual's needs. This is where qualified youth coaches and effective sports medicine play a key role.

Children and adolescents with health problems or disabilities also benefit from regular physical activity. Medical assessments and individual adjustments to physical activity recommendations regarding the type and intensity of activity, in consultation with experts, may be advisable in this regard.

Implementing the recommendations

Recommendations and opportunities in relation to physical activity and sport which are geared directly to individuals or to specific groups of children/adolescents should be based on the recommendations defined in this document, but their content and form may be adapted to the relevant target group. They should be structured in an age-appropriate fashion and in accordance with educational principles, and should take into account the importance of a safe environment conducive to physical activity.

Numerically, accidents represent the greatest risk in connection with physical activity and sport. In relation to sport, road traffic or leisure activities such as swimming, proper instruction, age-appropriate supervision and the correct material and equipment act as key safeguards.

Summary of recommendations for children and adolescents

- Regular physical activity is a basic requirement for healthy living. Based on current findings, children and adolescent of school age should engage daily in at least one hour of moderate to high-intensity physical activity in addition to their routine activities. Many physical activities and sporting pastimes are suitable in this regard.
- A varied range of physical activities and sports is necessary for children and adolescents to grow up in the best possible health. As part of or in addition to the one-hour minimum, time should be devoted several times a week to activities that build strong bones, stimulate the cardiovascular system, strengthen muscles, improve agility and maintain flexibility.
- Children at primary school level should engage in considerably more physical activity. Additional activities offer health benefits to all age groups.
- Individuals should avoid long periods of physical inertia as much as possible or punctuate such periods with short active stints of physical activity.

Recommendations, 2013. Produced by the Health and Physical Activity Network Switzerland (hepa.ch) at the request of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) and the Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO), and in partnership with the following bodies: bfu – Swiss Council for Accident Prevention, Health Promotion Switzerland, Swiss Society for Public Health, Swiss Society of Paediatrics, Swiss Society for Sports Medicine (SSSM), Swiss Society for Sports Science (SGS), Suva.

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CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

AT LEAST

1
HR
PER DAY

MEDIUM
INTENSITY



HIGH
INTENSITY



Several times
a week:

- BUILDS STRONG BONES
- STIMULATES THE CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM
- STRENGTHENS MUSCLES
- IMPROVES AGILITY
- MAINTAINS FLEXIBILITY

