

Patient information from BMJ

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Weight problems in children: increasing physical activity

Most doctors recommend children do at least an hour a day of physical activity, which can be broken into smaller chunks of 10 minutes at a time.

There are lots of ways that parents can help their children become more physically active. Physical activity doesn't have to be sport, although sport is great for children who enjoy it. It could also mean:

- taking a brisk walk
- cycling or walking to school
- taking dance classes
- just playing games outside.

It's best to try to find something your child enjoys doing, so they learn to see physical activity as a good thing.

One way to help increase the amount of physical activity a child can do is to reduce the amount of time they spend on inactive pursuits, such as watching television or playing video games. Studies show that children who watch more television are more likely to be overweight.

Doctors recommend that children spend no more than two hours a day watching television or playing with video games or computers. This is sometimes called 'screen time' because it's the amount of time they spend sitting down looking at a screen. To help your child limit their screen time, you might consider also restricting the amount of time the whole family watches television and uses electronic devices.

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