



National Association for Sport & Physical Education

An Association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 20191
Telephone (703) 476-3410
Telephone (800) 213-7193
Fax (703) 476-8316
naspe@aahperd.org
<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe>

For more information, contact:

Paula Keyes Kun (703) 476-3461, pkun@aahperd.org

CHILDREN NEED GREATER AMOUNTS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN 2004

RESTON, VA, December 30, 2003 - - Five years after releasing the first physical activity guidelines for children five to 12 years of age, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) is increasing the recommended amount. The first of four new guidelines recommends **at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours of physical activity per day**. This is not surprising given the fact that inactivity has contributed to the recent obesity epidemic and sedentary living is a known threat to health.

“With escalating obesity and physical inactivity rates for children, the public’s attention should now be focused to help schools and families across the country bring into action these important guidelines,” said NASPE President George Graham, Ph.D., of Pennsylvania State University.

“Schools are critically important to increasing physical activity of children because school programs can affect the behavior of ALL children on a daily basis.”

Lead authors of the revised *Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12*, are Drs. Charles B. Corbin and Robert P. Pangrazi of Arizona State University. The purpose of this document is to provide parents, physicians, physical education teachers, classroom teachers, youth physical activity leaders, school administrators, and all others dedicated to promoting physically active lifestyles for children with guidelines about appropriate physical activity for pre-adolescent children.

Summary Guidelines

Among the recommendations are the following:

- Children should accumulate **at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours**, of age appropriate physical activity on all, or most days of the week.
- Children should participate in **several bouts of physical activity lasting 15 minutes** or more each day.
- Children should participate each day in **a variety of age-appropriate physical activities** designed to achieve optimal health, wellness, fitness and performance benefits.
- **Extended periods (periods of two hours or more) of inactivity are discouraged** for children, especially during the daytime hours.

“To help bring these guidelines to fruition parents and schools need to set specific times each day for physical activity such as a before school activity, recess, physical education class, and an activity break after lunch,” said Charles Corbin. “Within a quality school physical education program, physical education teachers should:

- Expose youngsters to a wide variety of physical activities
- Teach physical skills to help maintain lifetime health and fitness
- Encourage self-monitoring so youngsters can see how active they are and set their own goals
- Individualize intensity of activities
- Focus feedback on process of doing your best rather than on product
- Be active role models.

“Perhaps the single most important time to increase physical activity and decrease sedentary activities such as television watching and computer time is after school between 3 and 6 p.m. This is a time when children can be active, but often are not. Many children are inactive during this time period through no fault of their own. Parents must help their children find safe and enjoyable opportunities to be active during this time period. Unless a special time is set aside each day, the opportunity to be active will slip away because barriers to physical activity are often great.”

When asked about barriers to promoting physical activity, the researcher said, “Without any question, the number one barrier to physical activity in schools is the perception that time spent in activity such as physical education and recess will undermine academic learning. The evidence does not support this assumption. We now know is that making time for physical education and physical activity does not reduce academic learning and it may actually increase it.

“Our research shows that children who are physically active during the day in school are much more likely to be physically active after school as well. Energy begets energy! The more fit and alert adults feel the better they perform. This is also true for children.”

Corbin said, “The bottom line is that sedentary living contributes to obesity and chronic diseases later in life. Starting the activity habit early in life is crucial. Children need at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of activity daily. It can be accumulated in many short (15 minutes minimum) intermittent bouts of activity and need not be done in continuous exercise periods that are appropriate for adults. Long periods of inactivity (more than two hours in length) are discouraged.”

To order a copy of the new physical activity guidelines, visit the online bookstore at www.aaahperd.org or call 1-800-321-0789. The cost is \$12 for NASPE/AAHPERD members, and \$16 for non-members. Stock number is 304-10276.

Information about the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) can be found on the Internet at www.naspeinfo.org. NASPE, the largest of the six national associations of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), is a nonprofit membership organization of over 18,000 professionals in the fitness and physical activity fields. NASPE is the only national association dedicated to strengthening basic knowledge about sport and physical education among professionals and the general public. Putting that knowledge into action in schools and communities across the nation is critical to improved academic performance, social reform and the health of individuals.