

ABSTRACT

## Kids need Physical Activity!

### National Recommendations for Physical Activity and for Physical Activity Promotion

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**Up to now, there have been no well-grounded recommendations for Germany for physical activity concerning children and young people – but also adults and seniors – and on how to promote physical activity on the basis of evidence-based results. Now that these recommendations are available, with this article we would like to present the ones relevant for children and young people. There are scientifically based answers to the questions “How much physical activity is necessary in order to achieve positive health effects” and “What findings from action research show how people can be supported in their efforts to be more physically active.” The recommendations target experts and stakeholders in the field of (promoting) physical activity.**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Infants and toddlers should move as much as possible and be hindered as little as possible in their urge to move. Nursery school age children should be active 180 minutes per day and more. Recommended for children ages six and up and also young people is daily exercise of 90 minutes and more of moderate to high intensity. The latest results of wave 2 of the study on the health of children and young people in Germany (“KiGGS”) show that we are still far away from achieving these recommendations. About half the children between the ages of three and six years spend one hour a day being physically active. Only 7.5% of girls between the ages of 14 and 17 years manage one hour of physical activity as recommended by the World Health Organisation. The current figures fall short of the new recommendations even more significantly. There is clearly an urgent need to encourage physical activity.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In children's first years, their home environment is the key location for physical activity. Parents give important signals. They are models, activity supporters and driving forces and should be actively involved in interventions aimed at promoting physical activity. Nursery schools and day care centres should give children time and space to experience all kinds of physical activity. In doing so, these institutions will not only encourage the children's fitness, but also their health and various aspects of their personality. This task requires a suitable environment. One current individual study shows that 90% of day care centres provide for two or more outdoor times per day, but only 40% of the children spent this amount of time outside; 32% were not outside at all. Of the facilities analysed in the study, when children spent more than 60 minutes outside, these children were moving intensively for only two minutes per hour. A great deal of persuasion is still needed to ensure that outdoor activities are important and well used. The decisive factor is that the pedagogues themselves should enjoy physical activities but, above all, also have the necessary expertise.

The school environment will also be a central starting point for promoting physical activity. According to the evidence available, the focus should be on optimising physical education lessons. There is proven effectiveness for short exercise breaks, i.e. active interruptions of lessons. Unfortunately, however, since the publication of the current KiGGS data, it must be said that the topic is still not being taken seriously enough. All-day schools in particular are facing challenges. Good concepts are available in many variations – but have to be used!

#### OUTLOOK

In addition to knowledge and information, also dissemination strategies will be necessary if we want to initiate change in people's day-to-day environments and physical activity levels. Municipal and political support will be essential to ensure that physical activities for children and young people are deemed a necessary investment in the future and are also properly encouraged.