

# FACTSHEET

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## How to get kids to be more active

Australian children are less active than ever before. There are many reasons for this, including:

- The increasing use of screens

**Note: The word 'screens' in this factsheet describes all screen and mobile touchscreen devices including TV's, Tablets, phones, computers and gaming consoles.**

- Less playing and every day activity like walking to school.
- Adults are also less active. There is a general trend for everyone to drive more and walk less.

### What we recommend

- Children benefit from more playing and spending less time on screens.
- Children should do at least 60 minutes (yes, an hour!) of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day to keep them fit and healthy. This means that they are "huffing and puffing". Start by increasing physical activity by thirty minutes each day and work your way up to 60 minutes.
- The more activity you can squeeze into your everyday life the better. Try some extra "incidental activity" like walking to and from school, doing household chores and walking up stairs.
- One of the main things that affect how much physical activity a child is doing, is the amount of screen time they are having. The more screen time, the less activity and playing a child does.
- Studies show that the more screen time children have, then the heavier they are.

- For children over 5 years keep "screen time" to **less than 2 hours per day**.
- For younger children keep screen time to under 1 hour per day.
- Active parents mean active kids. Plan family activities and play time. Doing things together starts healthy habits. You'll enjoy spending time together, you'll feel healthier and your mood will improve! (see below for ideas on what to do as a family).

### Ideas on ways to be more physically active

Encourage outside play:

- Try running, chasing, playing outdoors, scooting, skateboarding, bike riding and going to the park.
- For older children, include some structured sports such as soccer, footy, trampoline, swimming, netball, martial arts gymnastics and dancing.
- Encourage time outdoors each day for play. Children need to be "set up" to play outside. Put out the basic play equipment and maybe start off playing a game with them.
- Park further away from your destination, and walk some of the way.
- Try public transport.
- Walk to and from school.
- Use an app or an active watch to measure steps and aim for 10 000 steps each day.
- Offer pocket money for active jobs like walking the dog, washing the car and gardening.

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- Make exercise fun (map games, twister, hide and seek).
  - Make time in the day to be active, especially on weekends.
  - Plan time on the weekends for the family to be active together.
  - Put up a basketball or netball hoop.
  - Buy inexpensive play equipment such as totem tennis, badminton or a skipping rope.
  - Organise activities around the house e.g. a ball in the backyard.
  - Pack a healthy lunch and go out for the day. E.g. Have a picnic at the park and take a ball to kick around, or go on a family bush walk.
  - Make the most of daylight saving time and go for a regular family walk.
  - On warmer days spend the day at the beach or swimming pool (take healthy lunch and snacks).
  - For other ideas on ways children can increase their activity levels, contact the Department of Sport and Recreation on [www.dsr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au). There are a number of school holiday programs and after school programs that are run to help get children in Australia active. There is also the Active Kids voucher available for families to use.

### Remember

- Australian children need to be more active for good health.
- We recommend that children be active (huffing and puffing) for at least an hour each day.
- Younger children just need to play.
- Limit your child's screen time to less than 2 hours each day.
- Active children come from active families. Support your family in becoming more active by encouraging family activities such as regular walks, trips to the park, bike riding and family games.