

GummiKING™



Healthy & Nutrition

Should Your Preschooler Play Sports?

Keeping Preschoolers Active

If sports aren't a must, what should be on a preschooler's schedule? Engage your child in activities that are fun and challenging, but not beyond his or her abilities. Preschoolers are learning to hop, skip, and jump forward, and like to show how they can balance on one foot for a few seconds, catch a ball, or do a somersault.

Your child also may enjoy swimming, hiking, dancing, and riding a tricycle or bicycle with training wheels. All of these activities help develop skills and coordination. It's important for preschoolers to engage in a variety of activities to encourage a wide range of movement and skills.

The National Association of Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends that every day preschoolers should:

- get at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity (adult-led activity)
- get at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity (free play)
- not be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time (unless sleeping)

Adult-led activity means that you can get involved. Kids love seeing their parents play. Doing so also shows that being active is part of the normal routine for your family. Running, playing, and practicing basic skills, such as throwing, catching and kicking balls in the backyard or using playground equipment at a local park can be fun for the entire family.

Other activities to try with your preschooler (or for preschoolers to do together):

- Play games such as "Duck, Goose" or "Follow the Leader." Mix it up with jumping, hopping, and walking backward.
- Kick a ball back and forth or set up a goal for your child.
- Practice hitting a ball off a T-ball stand.
- Play freeze dance or freeze tag.
- Practice balancing by pretending to be statues.

Kids who enjoy physical activity tend to stay active throughout their lives. And staying fit can improve self-esteem, help maintain a healthy weight, and decrease the risk of serious illnesses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.