Being active matters!

Support document: January 2011
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Why being active matters!

“Physical wellbeing contributes to children’s ability to concentrate, cooperate and learn… Physical activity and attention to fine and gross motor skills provide children with the foundations for their growing independence.”


Drawing on conclusive international evidence, Australia’s first national Early Years Learning Framework, ‘Belonging, Being and Becoming’ (2009), highlights the importance of early childhood as a vital period in children’s learning and development.

Information from the Australian Early Development Index (www.aedi.org.au) shows that Tasmania has a higher level of vulnerability across the physical health and wellbeing domain of the AEDI than the national average. *Being Active Matters!* was developed to provide parents of young children with information and practical games and activities that encourage active play and the development of Fundamental Movement Skills, also referred to as Fundamental Motor Skills (FMS).

Often physical activity is talked about in a prescriptive way and viewed as something that is ‘hard work’. *Being Active Matters!* hopes to present a different view on physical activity by focusing on simple, low cost activities that can constitute physical activity, together with the enjoyment and bonding opportunities for parents and children through being active together. And this is aside from the considerable health benefits from being active regularly!

The importance of the development of movement skills is also a focus of the booklet, *Being Active Matters!.*

Australian based studies have discovered an important link between children’s development of FMS and physical activity (Barnett, van Beurden, Morgan, Brooks, & Beard, 2009). This research suggests that the establishment of good FMS during childhood is linked to increased participation in organised sports and general physical activity in later years (Cantell, Crawford & Doyle-Baker, 2008). Children with low motor skill proficiency are less physically active than their higher motor skill proficient peers.
In the long term, low motor skill proficiency can lead to low motivation levels to engage in physical activity (van Beurden, Barnett, Zask, Dietrich, Brooks, & Beard, 2003).

Research suggests that if given the opportunities to practice, children can be proficient in many FMS by the age of 6 years (Riethmuller, Jones, & Okely, 2009). Being active matters! provides a range of age appropriate activities that focus on five FMS including the catch, throw, kick, jump and hop. An additional skill important to FMS development is balance which is also featured within the booklet.

The purpose of this supporting document is to provide parents, early childhood practitioners and other interested persons with background information to the Being Active Matters! booklet.

Information provided within the original booklet is expanded upon and fully referenced in this document.
2 Content of the booklet

During the development of Being Active Matters! detailed information about young children’s physical activity, fundamental movement skill development, screen time and activities which support practising FMS was collected.

Due to the size and scope of the booklet not all information, including the references which allow for further research on being active, could be included.

This document provides a more detailed overview of the information, messages and references that are contained within the Being ACTIVE Matters! booklet.

For ease of aligning the information presented within the booklet and this support document, ‘refer to booklet pages’ have been included.

2.1 Physical activity
Refer to booklet pages: 2 – 5

What is physical activity?
Physical activity is movement and energy expenditure in everyday life - including work, recreation, active transport, exercise and sporting activity. It can also include household chores such as gardening, washing and vacuuming (Premiers Physical Activity Council, 2006).

Physical activity for under 5’s
Active play is the best form of physical activity for children under the age of five years.
Active play can include structured (planned) and unstructured (free) play, as well as active transport (such as cycling) (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009b).
Active play includes any type of activity that usually requires use of large muscle groups such as ball games, bike riding, chasings and swimming for fun (Move Well Eat Well 2009).
Recently the Department of Health and Ageing released the National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 years.

These recommendations are highlighted in the ‘Move and Play Every Day’ brochure which states:

- For healthy development in infants (birth to 1 year), physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments, should be encouraged from birth.

- Toddlers (1 to 3 years) and pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years) should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.


Why is physical activity so important for children?

Physical activity is important for children’s growth and development generally (Department of Health and Ageing, 2004).

It allows children to grow and develop:

- social skills with other children
- language and communication
- movement skills
- muscle, bone and heart health
- balance and flexibility
- good posture
- self-esteem and self confidence


During the early years, regular physical activity can have an impact on both immediate and long term health outcomes (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009b).

Children that are given opportunities to be physically active can learn and develop many skills. By spending time walking or riding, children can develop street sense. By engaging in group or team games and sports, children are able to form friendships and appreciate boundaries and rules (Department of Health and Ageing, 2004).
Parents role in children’s physical activity

Parents are the main role models and decision makers for young children. Parents are therefore in a great position to be able to provide opportunities to be active for their children. Without these opportunities, children may miss out on the many benefits that physical activity can offer, both in the present and into the future (Department of Health and Ageing, 2004).

Active young children are more likely than their inactive peers to be physically active throughout their childhood, which can create foundations for continued physical activity in later years (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009b). Equally children who are physically active as children are more likely to be physically active as adolescents and adults (NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, 2002).

Active times shared between parents and their children are great opportunities for talking, interaction and bonding (Department of Health and Ageing, 2004).

Parent testimonials of being physically active as children

It is often helpful for parents to reflect on their physical activity when they were children as well as think about their own children’s physical activity. This often reveals the fun, enjoyment and fond memories of being active.

A group of parents was asked to write a short recollection of either their physical activity as a child or their own children’s physical activity experiences:

“…When I was little it was my dearest wish to do ballet. At 4 years of age my Dad found a ballet class that was a one hour drive away. He took me to all my classes and always did my practice sessions at home with me. He used the kitchen sink as his bar and I used a chair. We would warm up together and go through all my exercises. I thought of him as a funny, daggy old Dad but he did it to get fit again and lose weight. I think of it with fondness now, especially as he died 4 years ago, aged 90…”

– Parent, St. Helens
“...Growing up, my family owned horses. Between the ages 3 and 13, I was active on horses and grew up grooming, riding or just running with them. I had some of the best times when my mum and sister and I were outside with the horses. I loved running up and down the paddocks with my horse Penny...”

– Parent, East Coast Tas

“...Recently during the school holidays our family (myself, husband, daughter 4, and son 2) went to “Goat Island” to explore. It’s a little island off the beach at West Ulverstone that you can walk to when the tide is low. We explored over the island, had a picnic, visited one of the caves on the island, saw starfish in the rock pools, found crabs under rocks and played on the beach. The kids were able to take the lead exploring at times, which seemed to make the experience more enjoyable for them because they felt like they were ‘in charge.’ We encouraged them to climb and walk themselves. We are all eager to go back again some day soon as it was such a nice family experience and, as parents, we could really see how much our kids are growing and what they are capable of...”

– Parent, Ulverstone

“...Our 2 year old son has just gone through a growth spurt and can better reach the peddles on his new and bigger bike. Until the other day he had been reluctant about riding his bike, often choosing the pram. We had to drop the car off in town for repair and decided to take the kids bikes to get home. Our son rode the whole way home (1.5km) with little help from my husband and me. He was full of life when he realized he could reach the peddles. He went so fast and was smiling the whole way. We were so proud of him and thrilled that he was getting so much enjoyment out of the exercise. It was fun for him as well as good for him...”

– Parent, West Ulverstone

(Stories kindly shared by Family Food Patch Educators from around Tasmania.)
2.2 Fundamental movement skills
Refer to booklet pages: 6 – 9

What are Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS)?
FMS are skills that help form the basis of many physical activities and sports. FMS are movements that have a series of steps (Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development, 1997). For example, the catch is a FMS that is made up of several steps which include: 1. Keeping your eyes on the object, 2. Moving your hands to meet the object… and so on. Developing FMS can help children participate in a range of physical activities and sports (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2002).

The types of Fundamental Movement Skills
There are 12 FMS, which are divided into two subgroups: objective control skills (skills that you need an object like a bat or a ball for) and loco motor skills (skills for moving the body).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object control skills</th>
<th>Loco motor skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catch</td>
<td>Run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick</td>
<td>Leap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhand throw</td>
<td>Hop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strike</td>
<td>Slide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball bounce</td>
<td>Gallop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underarm roll</td>
<td>Horizontal jump</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All physical activities and sports involve many of these skills. For example, netball and basketball involve running, catching, throwing and jumping; Australian Rules football involves catching, kicking, jumping, throwing and bouncing; cricket involves running, striking, throwing and catching; soccer involves running, kicking, striking, rolling, sliding… and so on. It is impossible to be involved in physical activity or sport without using at least one or multiple FMS (Department of Education Victoria 1999).

Being Active Matters! focuses on the catch, kick, throw, hop and jump. These skills were selected on the basis of age appropriateness and to ensure a mix of object control and loco motor skills.
Why are Fundamental Movement Skills important?

FMS are important skills for children to practice and develop because they are:

- an essential part of the physical, cognitive, social growth and development of children
- positively related to fitness, strength and endurance (Cantell, Crawford & Doyle-Baker, 2008)
- positively related to self-esteem, with the better the FMS, the higher the self esteem (Ulrich, 1987).

Children who have good FMS are more likely to be involved in physical activity as adolescents and adults (Barnett et al. 2009; Cantell, Crawford & Doyle-Baker 2008) and are less likely to be overweight compared to children with poor FMS. When children feel good about being physically active they are more likely to participate in physical activity (Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud & Cury, 2005).

When should parents start teaching their child these skills?

If children have the opportunities to learn FMS, they can master the skills at around the age of 6 years (Riethmuller, Jones & Okely 2009, Gallahue & Ozmun 2002).

The early years are a critical time to start practising and developing FMS. This is the time that children’s movement patterns are not well-established so can be influenced (Hardy, King, Farrell, Macniven, & Howlett, 2009). Additionally, it is the age when children eagerly participate in physical activity and generally enjoy being active!

Many parents believe that if they let their young children play in the backyard or at play group and child care they will naturally develop the FMS, but the truth is that these skills need to be taught.

How do children best learn them?

FMS must be taught as children do not just naturally learn them. Children best develop and learn FMS through practice (Hardy et al. 2009; Ketelhut, Ketelhut, Mohasseb & Scheffler, 2004). Parent involvement is also vital to children’s development of FMS (Riethmuller, Jones & Okely 2009 & Hesketh & Campbell, 2010).

By providing plenty of opportunities for children to practice FMS parents will be helping children learn them. It is also important for parents to have an idea of the steps within each FMS so they are able to assist and provide direction so their child can master the skill. Age appropriate steps for the featured FMS in Being Active Matters! are outlined in the appendices.
What can parents do to help their child develop FMS?

Parents play an essential role in the development of fundamental movement skills.

Once children reach formal schooling, FMS form part of the key curricula, however prior to formal schooling, parents are the main agents in teaching these skills. Parents can best help their children develop FMS by starting with one component of the skill and then once that component is mastered move onto the next component.

When teaching FMS, key considerations for parents or early years workers to support children in their development are to:

- provide lots of positive encouragement and feedback
- make sure it is a fun experience
- focus on one or two components at a time (young children may find one component of a skill particularly difficult but with practice and lots of positive encouragement they will learn it.)
- encourage the child to use both sides of their body (e.g. hop on their left leg and then swap and hop on their right)
- practice FMS with family and friends
- encourage development in all FMS not just the ones that your child is good at
- use a variety of games and activities to practice FMS
- utilise a variety of locations to practice FMS (e.g. your backyard, the local park or the beach)
- be a positive role model and share the fun and engagement of being active with your child.

2.3 Balance

Refer to booklet pages: 10 – 11

Balance is essential for almost all movement (Child and Family Canada 2003).

Practising balance activities with your child will help them with other movement skills such as catching, throwing, kicking, hopping and jumping (Child and Family Canada 2003).

A range of balance activities that parents can do with their child are provided in the appendices.
2.4 Activities you and your child can do together
Refer to booklet pages: 12 – 22

There are many activities that parents can provide for their children that will encourage the development of FMS. The movement specific activities provided within Being active matters! focus on various age groups (0–18 months, 18 months–3 years and 3–5 years age groups) and on 5 specific FMS out of the overall 12. The 5 skills reviewed within the booklet were: catch, throw, kick, jump and hop.

All activities featured in the book are included in appendix. These activities have been adapted from:

- Jump Start resource, developed by the University of Wollongong, New South Wales
- Be active Play Time, South Australia
- Feedback from parents who participated in the “Play It” session of Happy Hands, part of the Launching into Learning Birth to 4 program based at Abbotsfield Primary School in 2010.

Parents play an essential role in supporting and encouraging their children to be physically active.

When parents provide active opportunities for their children and join in with active play they are making activity a normal, fun part of life and setting their children up to be physically active in later years (Department of Health and Ageing 2004).

Parents can be active with their children through a range of activities. These activities are outlined in the appendices.

2.5 Remember to limit screen time
Refer to booklet page: 19

What is Screen Time?
Screen time refers to time spent using electronic media such as watching television and DVDs, playing video and computer games and spending time using the internet (Department of Health and Ageing, 2004).
Sedentary behaviour

‘Sedentary behaviour’ refers to the time spent doing physically inactive, low energy activities.

It is often thought that sitting down and being inactive doesn’t harm us but there are bad effects of being inactive for lengthy amounts of time. Sedentary behaviour can include watching television and DVD’s and playing computer and video games.

Children who spend long periods of time doing these sedentary activities are more likely to have poorer physical, intellectual and social development (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009b).

Why is limiting screen time and sedentary behaviour important?

Too much screen time is connected with many health concerns and takes away precious time for children to be active or take part in more developmentally meaningful activities. Research has found that children who spend more than 2 hours each day on ‘screen time’ are more likely to:

- be less physically active
- be overweight
- drink sugary drinks
- eat foods high in sugar, salt and fat
- have fewer social interactions (CSIRO, 2007).

Screen time and sedentary behaviour for under 5’s

The recently released National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 years include recommendations on screen time and sedentary behaviour.

These state that:

- Children younger than 2 years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).

- For children 2 – 5 years of age, sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.

- Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should not be sedentary, restrained, or kept inactive, for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010).
Why no screen time?

Screen time for children younger than 2 years of age is not recommended as it can:

- reduce the amount of time they can spend being active
- stop or affect social contact with others which can limit opportunities for language development
- reduce their concentration span
- negatively affect the development of eye movement.

Screen time has been shown to have no intellectual, language or health benefits for children (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009a).

Screen time should be limited in 2-5 year olds because it reduces the amount of time they can be active or taking part in play that will help their development.

The negative effects of too much screen time for this age group include:

- less healthy eating habits
- memory and thinking skills developing at a slower rate
- language development occurring at a slower rate (Department of Health and Ageing 2009a).

Ideas on how parents can work with their children to decrease screen time are included in the appendix, and have been adapted from:

- CSIRO
- Department of Health, Western Australia

2.6 Games to play with friends

Refer to booklet page: 23

Children enjoy being active and like being active with others. Group games are a good way to teach children about rules, help them develop social skills and also help them develop a range of movement skills.

A range of group games are included in the appendices.
2.7 More information

Refer to booklet page: 24

Being healthy isn’t just about being physically active. It is also about eating healthy foods and embracing a healthy lifestyle (Department of Health and Ageing, 2004).

More information about different areas of health can be accessed through the following Tasmanian organisations:

**Physical activity**

Premiers Physical Activity Council (PPAC)

PPAC has an ‘Initiatives’ database on their website that provides a snapshot of physical activity initiatives for parents, schools, adults, communities and workplaces.  

**Nutrition**

Community Nutrition Unit

The Community Nutrition Unit can help if you want to improve nutrition in your workplace, school, or community. They also have a range of great resources around infant and child nutrition. For more information:


Email: community.nutrition@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Phone: 6222 7222

Eat Well Tasmania

Eat Well Tasmania is a state-wide program that provides support and assistance for activities or projects that promote enjoyable healthy eating. Resources around healthy eating and assistance with nutrition projects can be provided. For more information:


Email: eat@eatwelltas.org.au

Phone: 6223 1266
Supporting healthy lifestyles in your community

Family Food Patch

Family Food Patch is a program that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children and families by creating a network of motivated volunteer parents and community members, known as Family Food Educators.

Family Food Educators are provided with training and information to assist in addressing the common food and physical activity concerns of parents in their local community. For more information:


Email: familyfoodpatch@iprimus.com.au.

Phone: 0409 405 789

Supporting healthy lifestyles in your child’s school

Move Well Eat Well

The Move Well Eat Well Award Program is a comprehensive, straightforward guide to creating a healthier environment for children. The Move Well Eat Well Award is available to Tasmanian primary schools, with schools being supported to meet key criteria which reinforce healthy eating and promote physical activity.

The Award is made up of six healthy messages:

1. Tap into Water Every Day
2. Plant Fruit & Veg in Your Lunchbox
3. Limit 'Occasional' Foods
4. Move, Play and Go
5. Turn Off Switch to Play

For more information:


Email: movewelleatwell@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Phone: 6222 7328
For more information on the *Being Active Matters!* booklet please contact:

Communication Services Unit  
Department of Education  
GPO Box 169  
HOBART Tas. 7001

Phone: (03) 6333 7497  
Email: communications@education.tas.gov.au

Alternatively download a copy of the *Being Active Matters!* booklet from:  
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  Last accessed online 3/11/2010 at:


4 Appendices

Included in this section is a collection of activities which are highlighted within the Being Active Matters! booklet.

These can be used as stand-alone activities for a particular age group or the information within the booklet generally may provide ideas to parents or others working with children.

Balance

Balance is essential to almost all movement. Practising balance activities with your child will help them with other movement skills such as catching, throwing, kicking, hopping and jumping.

You and your child can practise balancing together by holding onto a surface whilst standing on two feet, then lifting one leg off the ground. You may need to steady your child by holding them at the waist for a few seconds. Keep practising until the child can stand on one leg, with eyes open and arms in any position, all by themselves.

As your child’s balance improves, make changes to the activity by asking them to:

- Balance on one leg, with hands on hips and eyes closed
- Balance on one leg for more than 10 seconds
- Balance on one leg then swap to the other leg and back again.
- Balance on one leg for 20 seconds or more
- Walk the plank – by travelling along a line on the ground balancing on one foot and then the other
- Space walk – by placing paper plates on the floor between one room and the next, ask your child to balance on each plate as they make their way to the next room
- Limbo – move under a pole held at varying heights.

These activities were devised from feedback from parents who participated in the ‘Play It’ session of Happy Hands, part of the Launching into Learning Birth to 4 program based at Abbotsfield Primary School in 2010.
Get prepared for movement skills: activities for babies (birth – 18 months)

Although babies are not capable of fundamental movement skills there are many activities parents can do with them that will assist them with some basic skills such as balance and hand eye coordination.

- **Movement makes music**
  
  **Equipment:** rattle or shaker

  Let your baby grasp and shake musical instruments such as shakers, rattles and drums. Show your baby how to shake a rattle or bang it on another object to make a noise. Both of these things will help your baby develop hand/eye coordination skills as well as helping them to learn listening skills.

  *Need to make a rattle or shaker? Half fill small plastic bottles with pasta, rice, sequins, hundreds and thousands or beads. Firmly secure the lid with glue and tape.*

- **What’s in the box?**
  
  **Equipment:** cardboard shoe box, paper or paint for decorating, small toys and objects

  Decorate an old shoe box with coloured paper or paint. Cut a hole in the lid. Place some items inside such as small balls, blocks or toy animals. Encourage your baby to sit and reach into the box to pull out an item. This will help your baby develop stability and balance skills (Be active 2008).

- **Bubble catching**
  
  **Equipment:** bubble mixture and blower

  Blow bubbles and encourage your baby to watch the bubbles and to try and catch one. Ask your child to watch a bubble and reach for it. Talk them through the actions, e.g.: ‘watching… reaching… catching’.

- **Ball Play**
  
  **Equipment:** You may like to sit a box or an object a little in front of them and ask your child to hit the ball towards it. Try using textured balls so your baby has some extra grip.

These activities were adapted from Be active (2008). Be active Playtime. Parents Activity Booklet. Government of South Australia.
Movement activities for toddlers
(18 months – 3 years)

Help your child form the foundations for the catch, throw, kick and jump by regularly trying these activities:

- **Scarf Juggling**
  
  **Equipment:** light scarves or fabric

  Using a scarf or piece of fabric get your child to throw the scarf in the air and try to catch it before it touches the ground. You can ask your child to try and do a clap while their scarf is in the air before catching it.

  Remind your child to:
  - keep their eyes focused on the object
  - reach out and bring the object into them like a frog’s tongue

- **Aim and throw**
  
  **Equipment:** washing basket, small balls, rolled up socks or paper

  Sit a washing basket or box on the floor and give your child a collection of balls, rolled up socks and rolled up paper to throw in. Once they are capable of throwing a certain distance ask your child to take a step back and try again.

  Remind your child to:
  - keep their eyes forward
  - stand side on to the target
  - step as they throw
• **Skittle Soccer**

  **Equipment:** six empty plastic bottles, sand or rice, masking tape or chalk

  Fill 6 plastic bottles with sand or rice and place them on the ground about 30 cm apart, in a triangle shape. With chalk or masking tape mark a kicking point. Practice kicking with your child and see if one of you can get a ‘strike’ by knocking all 6 bottles over!

  *Need a craft activity? Your child may like to paint or use stickers to decorate the bottles to make them more attractive ‘skittles’.

  Remind your child to:
  
  • keep their eyes on the ball
  • place their non-kicking foot next to the ball

• **What’s the Time…? Jumping style**

  **Equipment:** nothing!

  Stand with your back to your child. Your child asks ‘What’s the time mum/dad/name?’ and you reply with a time (e.g. 3 o’clock). Your child then jumps forward 3 times. When you decide to respond to the question ‘What’s the time?’ with ‘Jumping Time’, you can turn around and jump after your child. If you catch them before they get back to their starting spot then it is their turn to be the time teller.

  Remind your child to:
  
  • swing their arms when they jump
  • keep their eyes forward
  • bend their knees on landing
  • take off and land on two feet

These activities were adapted from:

• The Jump Start resource, developed at the University of Wollongong

Movement activities for children
(3 – 5 years)

Now that your child is a bit older some more specific fundamental movement skill (FMS) activities can be tried (Department of Education Victoria, 1996). Remember the idea is to have fun!

- **Balloon volleyball**
  
  **Equipment:** balloons, string or masking tape

  Tie a piece of string between two chairs to create a volley ball net. Alternatively you could put a strip of masking tape or some markers along the floor/ground. Blow up a balloon and practise catching with your child by tapping the ball to them. Once they have caught it they can tap it back.

  Remind your child to:
  
  - keep their eyes focused on the object
  - reach out and bring the object into them like a frog’s tongue

- **Target practice**
  
  **Equipment:** cardboard/paper, pencils/textas/paint, blu tack, ping pong balls or bean bags

  Let your child create a target using cardboard and paper. Targets can be drawn or painted on. Once complete, stick the target to a wall, either inside or outside. With ping pong balls or light bean bags you and your child can practice under arm and over arm throwing to try and hit the target.

  Remind your child to:
  
  - keep their eyes forward
  - stand side on to the target
  - step as they throw
• **Balloon Juggles**
  
  **Equipment:** balloons

  Give your child a blown up balloon and ask them if they can kick it into the air. After a few goes ask them to see how long they can keep it in the air by only using their feet. Lastly, try and kick the balloon between each other without letting it touch the ground.

  Remind your child to:
  - keep their eyes on the ball
  - place their non-kicking foot next to the ball

• **Hop print**
  
  **Equipment:** paper, textas/pencils, scissors and masking tape

  Using some paper and textas/pencils get you child to practice tracing around your feet. Ask them to make up 10 tracings. Let your child cut these out and place them on the ground in a trail so they can practice hopping to each footprint. Encourage your child to change the pattern of the trail so they can practice hopping further distances or in different patterns.

  Remind your child to:
  - keep their eyes forward
  - keep one foot up
  - keep the foot that is up, behind their body

These activities were adapted from:

- The Jump Start resource, developed at the University of Wollongong
Ideas on how to decrease screen time

Screen time can often take away from valuable time for being active. To decrease screen time in your family try to:

- Set some family rules around screen time (e.g. the amount per day). Write them up as a family and put them up somewhere in the house where everyone can see them.
- Monitor the time spent on screen based activities with an alarm clock or a timer.
- Make your child’s bedroom a screen free area.
- Be a good role model by limiting the time you as a parent spend using screen based activities.
- Have activities in mind and/or equipment ready for your child to be physically active.
- Pre-record TV shows that your child wants to watch (particularly those aired in daylight hours). Your child can then spend daylight hours being active and watch television in the night hours.

Why not try some of these alternatives to screen time:

- Try swapping screen time for active time by asking your child to think of a list of all the active things they like doing. Put this list on the fridge so they can choose an activity if no screen time is allowed or after their favourite show has finished.
- Replace screen time by replacing your child’s normal screen time viewing with an active DVD every now and then. Active DVD’s shouldn’t completely replace active play or physical activity, but occasionally you may like to consider borrowing an active DVD such as dancing, aerobics or yoga (ones that are suitable for young children) from your local library or video store. Take your child along so you can select one together.

These ideas have been adapted from:

- Department of Health, Western Australia (2010). Unplug and play: How to limit your child’s electronic entertainment to less than two hours a day and encourage active play. Heart Foundation, The Cancer Council WA and Diabetes WA.
Activities you can do with your child

Try to make the following small changes to your family’s routine which will help you find more time in to be active with your child:

- On family outings try and fit some physical activity in by stopping at a park on your way home.
- Have a box of different play equipment such as balls, Frisbees, a kite in the back of the car so you and your children can be active anywhere.
- Carry a small ball (such as a soft stress ball) in your bag so it is available at anytime to practice throwing and catching with your child.
- Consider giving your child, and other family members and friend’s, gifts that can increase physical activity like bubble blowing kits, skipping ropes, roller skates and hoopla hoops.
- At your child’s next party or gathering consider some active games or dancing activities.

On those raining, ‘stuck inside’ days try the following activities that will help your child burn off some energy as well as developing movement skills:

- Collect a range of boxes of varying sizes and have a space ship- or castle-making day.
- Put on your child’s favourite songs and make up a dance routine together.
- Use masking tape mark out a hopscotch or a two/four square on the floor.
- Make an obstacle course for your child to have fun exploring:
  - jumping over a rope on the floor
  - sliding under a rope tied between two chairs at about adult knee height
  - climbing over a pile of cushions
  - crawling under a low table
  - crawling through the legs of chairs (make a tunnel out of chairs with a sheet draped over)
  - playing leap frog from one carpet square to another
  - crawling through blown up balloons tied under a table
  - crawling through a cardboard tunnel (with a tower half way along for standing up in and having a look around).
- Encourage your child to move like different animals:
  - zig, zag and zip like a darting sheep
  - slither along the ground like a snake
  - stomp like a an emu
  - hop like a kangaroo that never stops
  - crawl slowly like an echidna carrying his spikes
  - fly like a bird high in the sky
  - climb like a possum up a tree
  - gallop like a horse crossing a paddock

Use your backyard, courtyard or local park for some of these fun activities:

- Collect boxes, ropes, tyres, planks of wood and blankets and create a cubby or obstacle course as a family.
- Set up a treasure hunt for the a group of children in your neighbourhood and hide a range of clues and/or non-food items like stickers, sequins or bouncy balls.
- Put a herb or veggie garden in with your child.
- Incorporate water for active fun (e.g. a paddling pool to splash in and/or water-filled balloons to throw at a simple target or to sit on and burst).

Consider the following options as active opportunities for when you are heading out and about:

- Visit new parks or ovals and go prepared with some equipment such as bats and balls to really enjoy the new space.
- Go on a bushwalk with your family.
- Visit a beach and take a ball along for a game of beach volley ball. Use two sticks and a piece of string to replicate a net, or simply draw a line in the sand.
- Head to the pool – swimming is a great physical activity.
- Walk to your child’s school or to the local shop as a family.
- Go for a family bike ride.

These ideas have been adapted from the:

- Department of Health and Ageing (2004). Australia’s Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds, Canberra. Last accessed online 27/8/2010 at:
- Canadian Child Care Federation (2009). Resource sheets. Accessible online at:
  http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/publications/resourcesheets_en.html
Games for groups

- **End Ball**
  
  **Equipment:** balls
  
  Divide the group of children into two groups. Get each group to stand in a line facing each other, standing about 4 meters apart. Give each child a ball and on the signal of ‘Go’ the children try and throw their ball past the opposite group. Children must catch the ball and throw it back, again trying to get it past the opposite group. When all the balls are gone the side with the least amount of balls behind them is the winning group.

- **Streamer Swirling**
  
  **Equipment:** fabric and/or streamers, sticks and music
  
  Get children to tie strips of fabric or some coloured streamers to sticks. Put on some music and encourage your child to run with the streamer and swirl the streamers in different motions including: down low, up high, above their head, to either side of their body.

- **Kick at Targets**
  
  **Equipment:** plastic bottles or buckets
  
  Gather a range of targets like plastic bottles or buckets and place them in two groups in front of a fence or wall. Divide the children into two groups and give each group a ball. On the signal ‘Go’ each group member has a go of kicking the ball at the targets. The winning group is the first to ‘hit’ all the targets.

- **Corners**
  
  **Equipment:** plastic bottle and music
  
  Children jump around the room to music. When the music stops the children must hop to a corner. Spin a bottle in the middle of the room and the corner the bottle points to is the winning corner. Now try again!
• Lily Pad Jump

**Equipment**: large pieces of green paper or cardboard and paint

Use some large pieces of green paper or cardboard to cut out some lily pads. Mark one with something special such as some gold paint. Place the lily pads on the ground and put some music on. Children must jump from one lily pad to the next without stopping. Once the music stops they must stop jumping. The child on the special gold lily pad wins.

These activities were adapted from:

- The Jump Start resource, developed at the University of Wollongong