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## Benefits of exercises for children

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#### Abstract

Our children are our future—and understanding and supporting their natural yearning for physical activity will help lead them to a lifetime of happy and healthy living. If we joyfully teach them how to include healthy exercise from the early stages of their development, we will be giving our children a gift that will endure throughout their lives. Our “Children’s Fitness and Health Program” is geared towards parents and educators, and focuses on creative ways to incorporate exercise into our children’s everyday routine. Outdoor games and playful workout routines can be the tools that instill lasting joy of exercise. I was so lucky that I was introduced to, enjoyed and benefitted from these activities during my childhood. It created in me an appreciation and understanding of the complex benefits that fitness and exercise can add to a person’s wellbeing. Over the years I have been fortunate to share this lasting experience with many children and young adults.

**Keywords:** Physical Activity, Fitness and Health Program.

### 1. Introduction

Our children are our future—and understanding and supporting their natural yearning for physical activity will help lead them to a lifetime of happy and healthy living. If we joyfully teach them how to include healthy exercise from the early stages of their development, we will be giving our children a gift that will endure throughout their lives.

Among the many benefits are physical fitness, confidence and stronger self-esteem, more energy, better memory, and simply a good feeling about themselves—and they are easy to achieve. Our Take The Magic Step® team is as concerned as many of you about the growing problem of childhood obesity and the lack of exercise in their lives. Whether this obesity and inactivity is caused by the popularity of video games or the declining hours of physical education in schools, it is a wake-up call for everyone. Happily, there are ways of reversing this growing trend and helping our children to enjoy daily exercise and outdoor activities, which they love given the opportunity.

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The correct quantity of exercise is seemingly important for the optimal development and health status of children. Too much or too little exercise may have some adverse effects (McKeag, 1991). The purpose of this report is to provide a broad overview of the exercise-related concerns of paediatric health professionals.

Exercise can benefit a child’s brain in significant ways. It stimulates the formation of new neurons and enhances a substance that brain cells need to grow. As a result of these brain improvements from exercise, children experience better cognitive performance and focus, among other benefits. Children who are in better physical shape as a result of exercise also have more rapid reaction times than children who do not exercise. Exercise also helps children sleep better, which is another brain-related benefit.

Physical activity and sports are normally promoted for their positive effect on children’s physical health; regular participation in physical activity in childhood is connected with a decreased cardiovascular risk in youth and adulthood. Children who exercise are less likely to develop diseases and chronic conditions, including diabetes, allergies, thyroid imbalances, abnormal cholesterol levels, heart problems, respiratory issues and orthopaedic problems. Some believe that various childhood mental disorders, including depression, anxiety and

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attention issues, are at least partly physiological in origin and can be improved through exercise.

There is also a growing body of literature suggesting that physical movement has beneficial possessions on several mental health outcomes, including health-related quality of life and better mood states.

As children exercise, more blood flows through their bodies and to all cells and tissues. This helps to move adequate oxygen and nutrients to every area of the body, which is greatly beneficial to a growing child whose entire body needs large quantities of nutrients. As a result of added nutrients, the child has more energy for physical activities. Exercise helps a child's body to detoxify because it enhances blood flow. This is especially important given the amount of toxins that exist in the air, water and food that children encounter, in addition to the wastes that develop within the body from metabolism.

To emphasize once again the importance of exercise, I have put together some of the health benefits an active child can expect.

### Exercise Improves Physical Health

#### Long-term health benefits of exercise are:

- A stronger immune system! The body's ability to fight disease is improved. Children are less prone to colds, allergies, and diseases, including cancer.
- A reduction of type 2 diabetes by increasing insulin sensitivity and improving carbohydrate metabolism.
- A lower blood pressure and an improvement of the child's cholesterol profile.
- A strengthening of the entire cardiovascular system, including the heart and lungs. The heart develops a higher "pump-activity" while the child's heart and lungs are strengthened, supporting the prevention of heart disease.
- Children are less likely to become overweight and will have better control of their body fat. Overweight children are able to reduce their body weight and body fat due to the physiological effect of burning fat while exercising.
- Children develop stronger bone structure and muscle structure.

#### Active children enjoy additional health benefits, because:

- Exercise increases the blood flow to all body tissues, including the brain. Greater blood flow transports more oxygen and nutrients to the body's cells.
- Active children improve their body's ability to absorb oxygen through aerobic exercise. Due to the increased oxygen in their body's cells they feel more energized. More oxygen translates into more energy!
- Increased blood flow promotes the body's transportation of the by products of metabolism and toxins back from the cells for elimination, recycling, or further use elsewhere. Children who exercise feel fitter and more energized because of their body's ability to detoxify.
- Active children breathe better and sweat more.

Breathing and sweating are great ways to detoxify the body and help it keep itself "clean."

- Children increase their over-all fitness through exercise.

### Exercise Improves Mental Health

- Exercise enhances the brain's metabolism. Studies show that active children have improved memory as a result of better brain function.
- Moderate, fun-oriented exercise literally burns off excess harmful hormones and, at the same time, increases the release of beneficial ones. One of the beneficial hormones acts as neurotransmitter for establishing new memories.
- Active children have the ability to concentrate much better, even at the end of a long school day.
- Studies report that exercise decreases anxiety, reduces depression, and improves mood and outlook in children. In addition, their quality of sleep is improved

### Conclusion

Perhaps most importantly, physical activity develops children's self-esteem and confidence. Their ability to overcome challenging situations improves and they simply enjoy a better, sunnier outlook on life. In addition, our adolescent children can develop further social skills such as leadership and empathy.

To parents and educators: Your efforts to encourage our children to exercise more and in still in them the wisdom of good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle will yield years of dividends in these young people's lives.

To children: I wish you enjoyment of all your outdoor activities, your exercise, and your school! We are always with you.

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