



# Schools vs Cancer Physical Activity Guide

## Elementary School



**SCHOOLS vs CANCER**



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## Building a Case for Physical Activity Among Kids

Too many American kids are sedentary, which has led to an increased prevalence in obesity and overweight. Establishing an active lifestyle early in life is important, because kids who grow up being physically active tend to stay active as adults— and staying active can help reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

### Did you know?

The combination of excess pounds and too little exercise is putting youth at risk for serious health problems now, and as they get older. The following statistics show just how serious this problem is:

- In 2015, 48% of US youth nationwide reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day on more than 5 days per week. About 14% reported not having participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity over one day out of the week.
- Only 29% of youth attended physical education classes daily in 2015, and only 51% had physical education class at least once a week.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2015, 41% of youth played video or computer games or used a computer for something other than school work for 3 or more hours on an average school day. And just over 24% watched TV 3 or more hours a day.<sup>1</sup>
- 17% of children age 6-11 and approximately 21% of children age 12-19 are obese.<sup>3</sup>

- Obese children are more likely to become obese adults. And obesity in adulthood tends to be more severe in those who were overweight as children.<sup>4</sup>
- Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and stress, improves cognitive skills and attitudes, and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.<sup>1</sup>

Despite its benefits, many kids do not meet the minimum physical activity recommendations for several reasons:

- Not enough safe, affordable places to play in neighborhoods and community designs that lack sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and green space.
- Competition from more sedentary activities, such as playing video games, engaging with cellphone applications, watching television, or using a computer.
- Reductions in physical education requirements in schools. Schools and educators blame this drawback on common core requirements and test performance. Other factors are budget-related.

<sup>1</sup>United States. CDC. Physical Activity and Health. June 2015; <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/>

<sup>2</sup>Trends in the Prevalence of Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviors National YRBS: 1991-2015; [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/trends/2015\\_us\\_physical\\_trend\\_yrbs.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/trends/2015_us_physical_trend_yrbs.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>United States. CDC. National Center for Health Statistics. Obesity and Overweight. June 2016; <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>

<sup>4</sup>Sahoo, K., Sahoo, B., Choudhury, A. K., Sofi, N. Y., Kumar, R., & Bhadoria, A. S. (2015). Childhood obesity: causes and consequences. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 4(2), 187–192. <http://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.154628>





Highlighting the benefits

Being physically active has many health benefits – and it’s fun, too!

Despite potential obstacles and misconceptions, it is important and valuable to youth health for teachers to rally together to support children on their journey to wellness. Let’s debunk some common misconceptions about physical activity in schools:

FALSE	FACT
Physical activity with peers has no real benefit	Research states that sociocultural influences include support for and participation in physical activity of peers and siblings. <sup>5</sup>
Issuing new assignments is the only way to meet all learning objectives and keep students engaged. Students do not benefit from study breaks.	Short activity breaks throughout the day can improve students’ concentration skills and classroom behavior. Studies have shown better on-task behavior and overall improved behavior when students were given regular brief activity <sup>6</sup> breaks throughout the day.
Cutting physical education for classroom time is a sure way to improve academic performance.	Studies show that students whose time in PE or other physical activity at school was increased either maintained or improved their grades and standardized achievements test scores, even though they received less instructional class time than students in control groups. <sup>6</sup>

Teachers can help by knowing the facts

Getting enough physical activity is critical to maintaining a healthy weight. Physically active lifestyles can benefit your students, your school, and your community. So, help students take steps toward better health by being more physically active each day!

The American Cancer Society’s guidelines for physical activity help parents and teachers understand the exercise kids need:

- Children and teens should get at least 60 minutes of moderate- or vigorous- intensity activity each day, with vigorous activity on at least three days each week.
- Limit sedentary behavior such as sitting, lying down, and watching TV and other forms of screen-based entertainment.
- Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week (or a combination of these), preferably spread throughout the week.
- Moderate physical activity includes walking, skating, or dancing, and sports such as baseball, badminton, doubles tennis, or golf.

<sup>5</sup>Dobbins M, Husson H, DeCorby K, LaRocca RL. School-based physical activity programs for promoting physical activity and fitness in children and adolescents aged 6 to 18 (Review). (2013). Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD007651.pub2/pdf/>  
<sup>6</sup>EDUCATING THE STUDENT BODY: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School. (2013, October 30). Retrieved from [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK201500/pdf/Bookshelf\\_NBK201500.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK201500/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK201500.pdf)





**Vigorous activities** include jogging and running, swimming, martial arts, jumping rope, and sports like soccer, hockey, singles tennis, and basketball.

## SUPPORT HEALTHY KIDS

The American Cancer Society wants you to know that when you participate in a Schools vs Cancer event, you become a vital part of your community and the ACS community. More importantly, you become the empowering force behind a multitude of young people who learn what it means to take control of their wellbeing and become the healthiest versions of themselves possible.

By engaging in the Schools vs Cancer program, you become part of an organization of 2.5 million survivors, patients, advocates, volunteers, caregivers, and researchers doing everything within our power to save lives.

## Teaching your students about physical activity

Supplemental materials can be found as part of this packet or on our website. The objective(s) of the classroom activity sheets include:

- Increasing knowledge of students, teachers, and parents regarding the need for physical activity among kids
- Empowering students to become agents of change in their homes and within their communities – as they plan and execute physical activity efforts
- Helping students discover the ways in which their social environment impacts their perception of health
- In addition to the material mentioned above, we have also included useful notes on ways that you can adopt and encourage healthy habits at your Schools vs Cancer events. Also, we are sharing links that we love – where you can find more inspiration for supporting this journey to wellness.

## Classroom Activities

- Have students conduct a walkability/bikeability/playability assessment of their neighborhood. Do they have sidewalks? Bike lanes? Parks? Playgrounds? What makes it easier, or harder, for them to be active where they live? What could they do to make it easier to be more active?
- Encourage students (and their parents) to walk or bike to school. Discuss whether it was easy or hard to do, and why. Also encourage your school to participate in Safe Routes to School initiatives. **[saferoutesinfo.org](http://saferoutesinfo.org)**
- Incorporate daily classroom energy breaks. **[instantrecess.com](http://instantrecess.com)**
- Explore the “Active Schools” website, **[activeschoolsus.org](http://activeschoolsus.org)**. What ideas for active schools, active families, and active communities (check out the tabs FOR PARENTS and ACTIVE CLASSROOMS) do the students like? Which do they think they can do? How can they get started? How can they get their families, friends, and neighbors involved?
- Incorporate healthy, active celebration ideas (a dance party, active Simon Says, extra recess time in honor of birthdays, etc.).
  - HEALTHY AND ACTIVE CLASSROOM PARTIES  
**[actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/1249-healthy-and-active-classroom-parties](http://actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/1249-healthy-and-active-classroom-parties)**
  - HEALTHY SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS  
**[actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/parent-toolkit/partner-resource-pdfs/healthypartyguide-cando.pdf](http://actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/parent-toolkit/partner-resource-pdfs/healthypartyguide-cando.pdf)**





Start an activity challenge – Set individual goals and track minutes of physical activity (ask for parental involvement!). Pick a destination and see how long it takes to get there.

No-screen week – Encourage kids to give up TV, computers, and gaming devices for a day or week and replace with family activity time. Ask them to report back. Was it easy to do? Hard? What made it that way? What did you do instead? How can you encourage others to do the same?

- Challenge students to try a new activity, again, involve parents. Have the students draw a picture of their new activity. What did they like? Not like? Would they do it again?
- Alphabet challenge – challenge students to come up with an activity for each letter of the alphabet – work way through alphabet throughout the month/week/year (A=abs, B=bends, etc.)

## Getting active at your Schools vs Cancer event

- Promote biking to school on day of event
- Arrange walking school buses – have parent volunteers walk kids to school from different neighborhoods, or drop kids off a few blocks from school and walk as a group to school.

- Make a classroom physical activity tracking sheet (track minutes that everyone is active).
- Have a band (or some online music videos and good speakers) and get people dancing.
- Count your laps! As students complete each lap, give them a paper clip so that they can make a chain. At the end of the Schools vs Cancer event, they will have a chain of paper clips to commemorate their laps.
- Host an aerobics class. Check with local universities, YMCAs, or athletic clubs for some volunteer instructors.
- Set up volleyball or badminton nets and equipment. Provide balls, hacky sacks, Frisbees, croquet, or bocci balls for people to play with when they aren't walking.
- Organize active games like freeze tag, hide and seek, red rover, or kickball.
- Have activity-based contests:
  - Push-ups
  - Jumping jacks without stopping
- Present awards to:
  - Adults playing games with kids
  - People playing Frisbee, volleyball, walking extra laps, etc.





- Announce “special laps,” and invite the following groups to take a lap:
  - Any PE instructors, exercise leaders, or fitness trainers
  - Anyone who tries to get in physical activity every day
  - Anyone who regularly takes the stairs instead of the elevator
  - Anyone who works out with a friend or family member
  - Anyone who gets up early to work out
  - Any kids who take PE class
  - Any kids who would rather ride their bike/roller blade/play outside than watch TV
- Have ongoing announcements throughout the Schools vs Cancer event geared toward adults, such as:
  - Be active for at least 150 minutes each week! Get up ... get moving ... have fun!
  - Add more physical activity to your day! Try:
    - Taking a family walk after dinner
    - Riding your bike
    - Playing with your kids
    - Dancing and skipping

- Parking your car further from your office
- Leaving your office for a “walking meeting” or conference call
- Taking the stairs
- Standing throughout your workday
- Joining your Schools vs Cancer team for walk breaks during the day

## **Being active as a family has great rewards!**

Did you know that staying active can help reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. How would you feel if you learned that you have the power to influence your child’s quality of life?

Well, you do. Not only can being active together help make your whole family healthier, it can give you some enjoyable quality time together.

In the near future, your kid(s) will begin bringing home educational material and activities that will help them better understand the need for physical activity, discover creative ways to get moving, and overcome barriers to physical activity in their living environment. With this in mind, we strongly encourage you to join them on their journey to generations of wellness.



## Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ✓ Go for a walk after dinner.
- ✓ Set a “no” or “not too much” TV time rule during the week; encourage outdoor activity instead.
- ✓ When you do watch TV, make it a “family rule” to do something active during commercials, such as sit-ups, squats, or jumping jacks. You could even do a fun or silly dance!
- ✓ Walk wherever you can, whenever you can: to the store for a few items, to the library, to a neighborhood restaurant, to the dry cleaner.
- ✓ Spend active time together on the weekends. Go for a hike or a bike ride or play tennis.
- ✓ Keep track of your activity. Keep a calendar and write down what activity you do as a family. Start a contest to see who has the most activity each week.
- ✓ Take active vacations: Go on a bike tour or a camping trip where you hike to your campsite.
- ✓ Get in the habit of parking your car as far as you can from the front door of the grocery store, mall, library, restaurant, or school. Extra steps add up!
- ✓ Try geocaching. Add a high-tech hide-and-seek game to your outdoor adventures by searching for a geocache. Using a handheld GPS device, navigate to a cache stashed in your area (find them at [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com)). Pick up a prize, and leave one of your own.
- ✓ Get wet. Splash parks and the local pool are all perfect for helping cool off and being active at the same time.
- ✓ Strap on some skates. Adding wheels to outdoor activities almost always makes them more appealing. Outfit everyone with quad or inline roller skates, helmets, and pads.
- ✓ Ride a bike. Everyone can go farther when they’re pushing pedals. Besides being an easy mode of transportation, bicycling makes for a fun family outdoor activity.
- ✓ Plant a garden. Outdoor family activities don’t always have to be just fun and games. Try putting everyone to work in the garden. Rake, dig, weed, or water. If you don’t have a yard of your own, stroll a farmers market or visit a “you-pick-it” farm.
- ✓ Play soccer. While team play requires discipline and cooperation, kicking the ball around in your backyard doesn’t! Practice dribbling, passing, or shooting at a makeshift goal.
- ✓ Shoot some hoops. There’s a reason why every school yard and many suburban homes boast a basketball hoop just waiting for action. It’s fun and versatile – you can keep score or just “HORSE” around.
- ✓ Set and spike. You don’t need a beach to play volleyball (although that’s, awfully fun, too). A net at your local park or in your backyard works just as well. Some community pools or ball fields even have their own sand courts.





### **Give gifts that encourage physical activity, such as:**

- Bikes, skateboards, and scooters
- Balls, bats, and rackets
- Tennis shoes or workout clothes
- Gift cards for athletic stores to purchase athletic equipment

## **Physically Active Lifestyles – It Takes a Village**

Leading a physically active life requires making the choice not to be sedentary. Unfortunately, the communities in which we live, work, and go to school can make this difficult. Lack of sidewalks and recreation facilities and a community design that promotes driving instead of walking and biking are just a few of the obstacles. And it doesn't help that when budgets are tight, school physical education programs and bike paths are often the first to get cut. Nevertheless, there are steps you can take to overcome such challenge.

### **At home**

Do you live in a walkable community? Can you walk or bike to recreation facilities, parks, or trails? If not, why not?

Does your community need sidewalks, crosswalks, or traffic lights to make it safer for walking? Let your local transportation, planning, or zoning boards know your concerns. And contact your police department about speeding cars or crime.

### **At work**

Talk with your employer about adding physical activity programs as a health benefit. Encourage your employer to provide onsite exercise facilities, or work with insurance providers and local health clubs to provide discounts.

### **At school**

Many schools have eliminated daily physical education requirements and recess for students. You can work with your local school board or parent-teacher-student organization to address these concerns. You can also advocate to make school resources, like gyms, available to the community before or after school hours. Encourage your school to participate in Safe Routes to School or Walking School Bus initiatives to promote more walking and biking to school.

