



Preschooler *focus*

HOW YOUNG IS TOO YOUNG?

For many young children, organized sport participation is a key contributor to physical activity levels. It is important to focus on fun and active play in the early years, rather than on skills mastery and competition.

Sport participation in the early years should be a fun and enjoyable part of growing up.

At any time of the year, young children can have opportunities to participate in sport. Participating in sport can contribute to children's overall physical activity level, and may have other benefits such as development of motor and social skills, including teamwork and cooperation. Many parents enroll their children in a variety of sport programs.

It is important to consider the age and development of your child when enrolling them in different programs. The early years are a time to develop positive physical

activity habits and a love of sport.

But how young is too young? It's never too young to be active. Daily physical activity should incorporate many movement forms. Different activities can include body control skills, such as balancing and other forms of coordination, and locomotor skills, such as walking, running, jumping and skipping. Developing these skills will lay the foundation for future sport-specific skills.

Sport participation should focus on fun. Keeping score is the wrong message during the early years.



What is the Long Term Athlete Development Model?

The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) Model was created to help guide healthy sport participation. There are 7 stages to the model: Active Start, FUNdamentals, Learn to Train, Train to Train, Train to Compete, Train to Win and Active for Life. The LTAD Model was developed because not matching skills to a stage of development can have negative consequences, such as children not enjoying sport, an over-emphasis on winning, poor skill development and children dropping out of sport. This model encourages general activity in the early years and dedicated sport specialization in the pre-teen and teen years.

Did You Know?



The 2013 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity

reported that 75% of children and youth in Canada participated in organized physical activities and sports in the last year.

Available at:

www.activehealthykids.ca



The Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program at McMaster University is working to advance child health through excellence in research.

To learn about our current studies, visit us online at fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp

The Health Outcomes and Physical activity in Preschoolers (HOPP) Study

at McMaster University asked parents of 3- to 5-yr-olds about sport participation. 87% of parents reported participation in organized activities in the last month and 90% in the last year. The sports most often reported were: swimming (79%), soccer (48%), gymnastics (40%), dance (30%), ice hockey (21%), and T-ball (9%).

What can Parents Do?

- ★ Be a positive sports role model!
- ★ Emphasize the fun of sports!
- ★ Don't focus on the rules, keeping score or competition in the early years.
- ★ Be sure the sports program and equipment are safe and age-appropriate.
- ★ Be supportive of your child's coach and teammates.

Benefits of Sport Participation in the Early Years

- ❖ A way of being physically-active leading to...
 - ❖ Physical well-being, such as reduced risk of obesity and improved fitness.
 - ❖ Psychological well-being, such as reducing anxiety and depression and increasing self-esteem.
- ❖ Development of teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and coping skills.
- ❖ Social development - children have opportunities to respect others, cooperate, and make new friendships.

The National Coaching Certification Program in Canada certifies coaches in 66 different sports!

Your preschooler's interests may change over time. Exposing them to a variety of sports will help them develop a love for different types of activity.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Active Healthy Kids Canada (www.activehealthykids.ca)
 Best Start Resource Centre (www.beststart.org/haveaballtogether/campaign.html)
 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (www.cflri.ca)
 Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (www.csep.ca/guidelines)
 Caring for Kids (www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
 McMaster University Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program (fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp)
 ParticipACTION (www.participaction.com)

Additional Readings:

Are we Driving Our Kids to Unhealthy Habits? The 2013 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity. Available at: www.activehealthykids.ca
 Child Study Centre: Kids and Sports http://www.aboutourkids.org/files/articles/sept_oct_0.pdf
 Long-Term Athlete Development Information for Parents. http://www.coach.ca/files/CAC_LTADFORPARENTS_JAN2012_EN.pdf
 Long-Term Athlete Development Model. <http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca/learn-about-canadian-sport-life/ltad-stages>
 Sports and Kids: pathways to healthy development or to unhealthy competition? http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/sports_kids_pathway_healthy_development_or_unhealthy_competition