It is easier to participate in a variety of physical activities and sports for life if you are physically literate because you can perform many fundamental movements, like running, throwing and swimming. These movements can then be applied to different settings and environments. Movement skills are relevant for adults too, but for kids, a lack of these skills may mean kids will withdraw from active games or sports. The graphic, left, outlines what a child might be missing without certain movement skills.

Physical Literacy is “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and engage in physical activities for life” (Canada's Physical Literacy Consensus Statement)

Many athletes didn’t specialize in one sport too young. Participating in different physical activities develops movement skills and confidence that can be transferred from one activity to another. For example, Clara Hughes won Olympic medals in both cycling and speed skating!
How do I know if my child is developing physical literacy?

Aspects of physical literacy can be monitored with assessment tools designed to be used by physical education teachers or coaches. As a parent, you want to consider if your child has the skills, motivation and confidence to move in a variety of ways in different environments. The following list of movement skills should begin to emerge in the early years.

- Swim (comfortable in water)
- Throw and catch a ball
- Strike an object (with a bat, hockey stick, etc.)
- Land from jumping
- Balance on one leg
- Somersault

If your child can perform most of these skills, he or she is making progress towards physical literacy. If not, your child may just need some more time and attention in certain areas.

According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years, children under the age of 5 should be getting at least 180 minutes of physical activity every day. Moving in a variety of ways and environments will contribute to meeting this guideline.

How to Support Physical Literacy Development in the Early Years

- Support and encourage free play in a variety of environments, including: water (swim, canoe), land (run, bike, dance), snow (ski, toboggan), and air (jumping, gymnastics)
- Motivate your child when playing and moving
- Try new games and activities as often as you can to build confidence in new situations
- Teach your child about the health benefits of being active
- Enroll your child in programs that talk about physical literacy in their programming
- Support structured and unstructured play

References


Copyright © 2016 HAT Caldwell, NA Proudfoot & BW Timmons. Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program, McMaster University. Published and distributed by the Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program. All rights reserved. Download and use of this newsletter or its content is for non-commercial use only and must be accompanied by this copyright notice or attribution to the authors and owners must be specified.