

Physical education and activity at school has many benefits for children.

- ♣ Quality physical education programs have been shown to: enhance learning readiness, improve academic performance, enrich self-esteem, deter antisocial behavior, restrain drug and alcohol abuse, and reduce absenteeism.
- ♣ Schools that offer physical education programs – even when time is taken from the academic day – post positive effects on academic achievement, including increased concentration, improved scores in mathematics, reading and writing, and reduced disruptive behaviors.
- ♣ School programs are more important for increasing children’s energy expenditure because children are less likely to participate in physical activity in the absence of adult supervision.
- ♣ Children who are physically active during the day in school are much more likely to be physically active after school as well.
- ♣ Children need at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of activity daily. It can be accumulated in many short (15 minutes minimum), intermittent bouts of activity and need not be done as continuous exercise.
- ♣ Physical activity has substantial health benefits for children and adolescents, including favorable effects on endurance capacity, muscular strength, body weight and blood pressure.
- ♣ Positive experiences with physical activity at a young age help lay the basis for being regularly active throughout life.
- ♣ Exercise has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression and raise self-esteem. Removing such emotional barriers may help children focus more in the classroom.
- ♣ Very young children also may learn partly through movement. Physical activity helps them learn about various spatial or temporal relationships.

Sources: Fitness for Youth/University of Michigan; Tennessee Department of Education, Office of School Health Programs; Medical Student Journal of the American Medical Association, 2002; National Association for Health and Fitness; National Association of State Boards of Education; Arizona State University Research e-Magazine, Summer 2002