FACTSHEET 2

Physical activity guidelines for



EARLY YEARS (UNDER 5s) – FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE CAPABLE OF WALKING

1. Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.*
2. All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

* Most UK pre-school children currently spend 120–150 minutes a day in physical activity, so achieving this guideline would mean adding another 30–60 minutes per day.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Physical activity is likely to occur mainly through unstructured active play but may also include more structured activities. Activities can be of any intensity (light or more energetic) and may include:

- Activities which involve movements of all the major muscle groups, i.e. the legs, buttocks, shoulders and arms, and movement of the trunk from one place to another
- Energetic play, e.g. climbing frame or riding a bike
- More energetic bouts of activity, e.g. running and chasing games
- Walking/skipping to shops, a friend's home, a park or to and from a school

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
- Reducing time spent in a pushchair or car seat – this can also help to break up long periods of sedentary behaviour

What are the benefits of being active for at least 180 minutes each day?

- Improves cardiovascular health
- Contributes to a healthy weight
- Improves bone health
- Supports learning of social skills
- Develops movement and co-ordination

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers* (2011)

DHSSPS Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

The Scottish Government

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