



POLICY BRIEF

Physical activity and health for children and adolescents in Africa: COVID-19 and beyond

FOR HOME, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



September 2020

What is the purpose of this policy brief?



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Physical activity and health for
children and adolescents in Africa:
COVID-19 and beyond

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Targets children and adolescents aged 3-18

Public pre-primary, primary and secondary schools

Communities

Homes



How much physical activity is recommended?

Preschool-aged children (ages 3-5 years)

- Physically active throughout the day
- Accumulate at least 180 minutes of any physical activity daily

School-aged children and adolescents (ages 6-18 years)

- At least 60 minutes or more daily



Children with disabilities should be supervised to ensure that the physical activity is safe until, and/or they can perform the activity independently.

Physical activity recommendations for children and adolescents during COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for children and adolescents to meet the age recommended physical activities has been adversely affected.

- **Three-pillar approach**



How are the pillars applied?

Children with disabilities should be supervised to ensure that the physical activity is safe until, and/or they can perform the activity independently. These activities can be discussed with specialised sport or rehabilitation professionals **to suit each child and cater for their specific needs.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for children and adolescents to meet the age recommended physical activities has been adversely affected.

Physical activity recommendations for children and adolescents during COVID-19

The three-pillar approach illustrated here is recommended to promote healthy physical activity within a healthy and safe home, school and community environments for children and adolescents, **specifically to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.**



Home

1. Protection and mitigation measures



- y Encourage handwashing before and after physical activity.
- y Parents and caregivers should create awareness and teach the basics about COVID-19, e.g. what it is, how it is transmitted, and how to avoid infection.
- y Parents and caregivers should encourage open communication with children about COVID-19, e.g. <https://bit.ly/3gW13g3>
- y Children should not be physically active when sick or feeling very fatigued. They should reduce or stop activity if they feel faint after being active or fatigued during the day, or suffer from persistent aches and pains after being active.
- y Parents and caregivers should be encouraged to see a healthcare practitioner for advice if a child shows signs of fever, headaches, dry cough, body aches etc.

2. Physical environment design



- y Parents or caregivers should create safe space/areas for physical activity.
- y The use of equipment (balls, hula-hoops and homemade hand-held weights) is not necessary for physical activity, but its usage is encouraged if available.

3. Age-appropriate physical activity and physical literacy practices



- y Parents or caregivers should make a schedule of structured daily activities. Routine/ **timetables are beneficial.**
- y Activity ideas should include playing traditional playground games indoors or outdoors (e.g. hide and seek, tag, skipping), dancing to music, and getting creative (e.g. building an obstacle course, playing balloon volleyball, making an action movie or learning to juggle) and teaching basic gross motor skills (walking and running).
- y Parents or caregivers should utilise online resources for physical activity ideas, e.g. <https://bit.ly/2DuhZwq>; <https://uni.cf/2DonnRw>; <https://uni.cf/32RxtmF> (use applicable and appropriate activities).

Home



Protection and mitigation measures

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School

- Physical activity should be done in smaller classes or groups to create space for social distancing of at least 1.5 metres between each child.
- Create spaces where individual children can do a physical activity in turns or in a way that conforms to requirements of social distancing, e.g. games like skipping and hula-hooping.
- Physical activity should take place outdoors where possible, or in a well-ventilated room to allow for maximum ventilation.
- If physical activity takes place indoors, the room must be cleaned and surfaces sanitised before and after each physical activity session.
- Teach older children to sanitise after using spaces and equipment.

Communities

Physical activity and physical literacy practices



- Encourage activities that promote cardiovascular fitness and strength but maintain social distancing (e.g. aerobics, dance, high intensity-interval training, hopping and jumping).
- Encourage activities and games that promote agility, balance, co-ordination and speed but maintain social distancing.
- Encourage activity circuits that incorporate mobility, strength, power, endurance and cardiovascular fitness.
- Encourage sport-specific activities and drills for older children and adolescents that can be performed while observing social distancing and appropriate sanitising and use of equipment.

Call to Action



Communities should be encouraged to remain vigilant about child safety, and to take further steps to ensure that children can play outside in a safe and healthy way.

Efforts to put policy into practice and ensure that all children have opportunities for organised physical activities should not be abandoned.

Acknowledgments

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THANK YOU

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