



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Early Years

# Ready family

# Ready child

Supporting Physical Development





## Supporting Physical Development

To help your child with their physical development you can

### **Know about how much physical activity is healthy:**

It is important to know how much physical activity your child should have in order to keep healthy. Here are the [NHS Guidelines](#) that informs you how much a typical preschool child should be doing. Pre-schoolers should be spending at least 180 minutes (3hours) a day, in a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play. Do not worry as this is easily achieved. The guidance tells you why your child needs this amount of physical activity to stay healthy and provides you with practical activities to achieve this goal.

If you believe, your child and you need support because they are overweight then visit [NHS what can you do if your child is overweight advice for parents](#)

You can also contact your GP or Health Visitor for advice. Likewise, if you believe your child might be underweight then consult your GP or Health Visitor.



### **Role Model:**

You will strongly influence the amount and type of physical opportunities available for your child. Therefore, it is important to consider your knowledge and attitude towards physical activities. The interesting thing is that the physical activities that are suitable for your child are also just as good for you! The poster from the NHS campaign will also support you to achieve some physical activities you can do alongside your child. [Physical Activity for Early Years Birth to Five](#)

### **Get moving to build the brain:**

Movement and being physical triggers processes that are critical to early learning and development. When children (and adults) move, the brain releases a chemical called dopamine, known as the pleasure response or (happy hormone). This sense of pleasure makes children want to move, explore and learn more. Likewise, physical play can help increase our 'serotonin levels' this a chemical that contributes to our sense of well-being and, in turn, helps children to be more attentive.

Physical activity also increases our levels of protein, which is essential for nerve growth within the brain. It helps the brain be healthy and supports memory.

Research shows that the more active children are then they demonstrate better attention skills, and have faster thinking skills. In essence, movement and being physically active 'turns on' the brain. Find out places to go and things to do to help you with this here: [50 Things to do before you are 5 in Bedfordshire](#)

### **Healthy Diet:**

In order to be physically active the body needs fuel (food) to be active. Good nutrition is essential during childhood, as it is a time of rapid growth, development and activity. The [NHS Healthier families](#) guide will also support you with easy ways to eat well and move more. If you have decided to provide your child with a packed lunch when they start school, they also have healthier lunchbox recipes.

This is also a vital time for healthy tooth development and prevention of decay, so a good oral routine is essential. The [NHS guide what to feed young children](#) supports families to make good choices on what to provide their child and it also discusses tooth decay, oral hygiene and looking after your child's teeth. If you need support to find a dentist then this link will help you [NHS Find a Dentist](#).

### **Physical benefits:**

There is lots of evidence, which shows exercise is an important key to reducing our risk in later life of major illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer. Research also shows that regular physical activity can boost our self-esteem, mood and sleep quality, and supports our mental wellbeing. However, because of our modern lifestyles and an increasing reliance on technology, we are less active nowadays, both as adults and as children.

Research also indicates that inactive children are likely to become inactive adults, putting young people at risk of developing those life-threatening conditions. This is why it is important to encourage exercise and keeping fit and healthy from a young age.

### **Where else can you get ideas and support?**

If your child is not in a setting yet, you can search for suitable childcare (Early Years education) in the comfort of your own home by using our [Childcare Local Offer](#). If you need further support then our [Family Information Service](#) can help you to find suitable childcare.

To help you make an informed decision on the right childcare setting we have some questions that you might want to consider when you make contact with the Early Years Setting ([link here](#)).

If you want to know how to pay for the childcare (Early Years education) then visit the Governments website [Childcare Choices](#) that will provide you with choices on how to pay for the childcare (Early Years education).

Our Children Centre's can also provide you with a timetable of their play and stay sessions here [Children Centre](#).