



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACT SHEET #2

# PHYSICALLY ACTIVE PLAY

Physically active play involves the body and its large muscles in gross motor movements. This includes activities such as throwing, running, leaping, climbing and swinging. Through physical play children develop new skills and find out how their bodies move and work. Physical activity along with good nutrition is a contributor to healthy development.

Physical play is important for developing:

- Muscle strength
- Muscle endurance – the ability to repeat actions, increased stamina
- Improved coordination, agility, balance and flexibility
- Cardio-respiratory endurance – ability to sustain moderate intensity activity for prolonged periods
- Gross and fine motor skills eg: hand/eye, eye/foot coordination, spatial awareness
- Specific motor skills such as kicking and catching
- Team work and cooperation
- Spatial awareness

Through physically active play children improve their fitness which leads to better health, greater energy, wellbeing and alertness. Physical activity aids with children's cognitive development through opportunities for planning and negotiating their activities, experimentation with new skills and learning through trial and error. Children who have opportunities to be physically active are able to focus their attention on self-directed tasks, develop cooperative friendships to problem solve and, as a result, develop social skills and relationships with their peers.

Vigorous play is fun and exciting. Children can experience feelings of relaxation, release from tension and a sense of oneness (connection of mind, body and spirit) after physical exhilaration. A balanced outside school hours care program should embed opportunities for physically active play. This should be planned for in the same way as any other form of play. The mere provision of an outdoor play area for 'free' play is not sufficient. Children need enthusiastic adults, equipment and encouragement to participate in a wide range of physical activities. Educators who are mindful about planning opportunities for physical activity understand that children as kinesthetic learners engage best by doing.

Physical play activities can also be planned for excursions. A visit to the local park where space may be available for a vigorous game of football as well as the different climbing and play equipment available all helps to provide varied and new experiences for children.

