Simple Physical Activities for Healthy Mind and Body

Nutrition Education Module 5

Learning objectives:
1. Understand the importance of physical activity and exercise for optimum health.
2. Be able to encourage children to engage in physical activities and exercises;
3. Be able to differentiate exercise and physical activity;
4. Appreciate the benefits of physical activity and exercise; and
5. Learn suggested physical activities and exercises for school age children.

Exercise is integral in achieving overall health. When partnered with proper nutrition, optimum well-being is highly attainable.

Quick Facts
In the 2013 National Nutrition Survey of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI-DOST), 3 out of 10 Filipino adults are overweight or obese, a very high prevalence of physical inactivity was found among adults. Globally, physical inactivity has also been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for mortality, causing an estimated 3.2 million deaths (WHO).

In the current era of digital devices, encouraging children to engage in physical activities is as difficult as influencing them to eat their vegetables and fruits. They are increasingly exposed to hand held devices causing them to develop habits with very minimal physical activity. It is now more challenging to invite them to outdoor activities like gardening or to the different laro ng lahi we have such as patintero.

Act now!
Teach our young school children the importance of physical activity. Introducing them to its benefits and roles on health can make an impact on their daily habits as early as now. And if paired with proper nutrition, children can achieve optimal health and development.
What is Physical Activity?

Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy. This includes:
- Household chores
- Transportation
- Leisure
- Occupational activities
- Home and family care
- Recreational activities or sports.

Classifications:

Baseline Physical Activity
It pertains to daily, light-intensity activities we usually do such as standing, walking, and lifting.

Health Enhancing Physical Activity
Physical activity, when added to baseline activity, produces health benefits. Brisk walking, jumping rope, dancing, lifting moderate to heavy objects, climbing on playground equipment at recess, and doing yoga or Zumba are some examples.

Exercise is Medicine!

There is a strong evidence on the benefits of exercise in weight maintenance as well as treatment and prevention of chronic illnesses. Even simple regular physical activity has been proven beneficial in preventing the onset of various diseases. It has been studied and proven that a 10 minute continued physical activity can be beneficial to health. Although 10 minutes is not enough to be fit and healthy, it is important to realize that exercise can be programmed and distributed throughout the day. Indeed, considering its long-term benefits, exercise can be fun and doable.

Benefits of Regular Physical Activity at Correct Intensity:

- Reduces the risk of death by 40%
- Lower risks of colon cancer by 60%
- Reduces incidence of diabetes by almost 40%
- Reduces incidence of high blood pressure by almost 50%
- Can reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease
- Can decrease depression as effectively as medications or behavioral therapy
- Regular physical activity has been shown to lead to higher scores for adolescents
- In elementary school setting, regular physical activity can decrease discipline incidents involving violence by 59% and decrease out-of-school suspensions by 67%

Exercise is indeed a medicine. Looking at the list above, these are the common diseases among adults. Hence, it is crucial to avoid physical inactivity at the early age of school children and fight one of the leading causes of ill-health. Otherwise, it can pose a greater risk to individuals than other risk factors.

Page 2 of 4: Simple Physical Activities for Healthy Mind and Body
Be Active and Be Productive

Allow children to be physically active. Let them play or involving them to do some household tasks can be a good practice.

Exercise may not only help in achieving overall health but may also assist a child’s holistic development. It can even help improve school performance and discipline.

Increasing Daily Activities:

✔ For all individuals, doing some activities is better than doing none at all. Even small increases in baseline activity can improve overall health. Increasing baseline activity (e.g. activities of daily living) increases energy expenditure, which can help maintain a healthy body weight. If these baseline activities are weight-bearing, they may improve bone health as well.

✔ Walking short distances instead of taking a vehicle may help reduce traffic congestion and may decrease pollution. Baseline activities has other benefits than health.

✔ Baseline activities help build a culture where physical activity is the social norm.

✔ Short duration of activities are appropriate for people who were inactive and have started to gradually increase their level of activity. These are also for other individuals whose activity may be limited by other conditions.

Physical Activity Recommendations for Children (5-12 years)

Active Travel:
Walking, cycling, stair climbing

Active Daily Tasks:
Some household and school chores are scrubbing or mopping floors, fetching water in a pail, raking leaves, bathing a dog, rearranging household furniture, or similar activities at home or school.

Encourage children to help-out in some of the household or school chores not only to develop responsible character but also to keep them healthy and active. Ensure that chores given to children are manageable and safe. Guidance and supervision is advised for the safety of the children.

Exercise, Dance or Sports:
Program physical activity for 20-30 minutes daily such as sports or active games. Activities that are being done in physical education subjects may help add to children’s active lifestyle.

Keep moving!

A 10 minute daily exercise is beneficial to health. It will improve your fitness level. Enjoy quick breaks or short episodes of activities leading to complete daily physical activity requirements for long-term health benefits.
Encourage children to choose their own sport or physical game they truly enjoy. This will help keep them be active.

**High Impact Play (unstructured spontaneous):**
Activities pertaining to high impact active play on most, if not, all, days of the week such as running, jumping, hopping, skipping, *luksong tinik*, *patintero*, *tumbangpreso*, *agawan base*, and other *laro ng lahi*. Walking, stair climbing, climbing trees, and playground activities such as jungle bars, ropes, and other similar activities are also recommended. Guidance and supervision is advised for the safety of children.

**Active Travel:**
Walking, cycling, stair climbing

**Active Daily Tasks:**
Same as activities for children ages 5-12 years old.

**Exercise, Dance or Sports:**
Teens and young adults need at least 40 minutes of programmed physical activities such as fitness related, rhythmic, or sports activities. For fitness goals, the minimum is a continuous 20-30 minutes for at least 3-5 times a week.

**High Impact Play (Unstructured Spontaneous Play):**
At least 20 minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous physical activities resulting in rapid breathing such as brisk walking, jogging, local games (*tumbang preso*, *agawang base*, etc.) and dancing.

**Muscle Strengthening and Flexibility Activities:**
At least 2-3 times a week of activities that build muscle, bone strength and flexibility such as weight bearing calisthenics and load bearing exercises involving major muscle groups.

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References:
- Ian Curt Sarmiento, Nutrition for Exercise and Sports, 2014
- Philippine National Guidelines on Physical Activity, 2015
- Strength and Conditioning Inc. Philippines, 2015
- Your Prescription Health Series, Exercise-Is-Medicine, Philippines, 2015

Page 4 of 4: Simple Physical Activities for Healthy Mind and Body