

# Give Kids an Active Start!

Start building healthy habits through daily physical activity from birth to age five.

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Young children should enjoy physical activity — laughing, singing, dancing, and exploring.



01

# Build a lifetime habit of daily physical activity.

Movement and motor competency enhance young children's overall physical, cognitive, and social development. Children are more physically active when given adult support and opportunity.

Parents, caregivers and teachers have a responsibility to provide the appropriate physical activity environments and success-oriented activities that promote confidence and enjoyment of daily physical activity.

Physical activity with friends, family members, or classmates should take place in a relaxed, safe, supportive environment.

[www.shapeamerica.org/ActiveStart](http://www.shapeamerica.org/ActiveStart)



Photo by Frank McKenna on Unsplash



02

# Physical activity is for everyone.

All children are entitled to the benefits of physical activity. Children with disabilities, children with obesity, and those reared in low-income environments are often left out and not provided the same opportunities.

Parents, caregivers and teachers should **adapt activities to include all children** by modifying equipment, rules and boundaries as needed.

Every child has diverse strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs. Responsive and respectful learning environments welcome children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

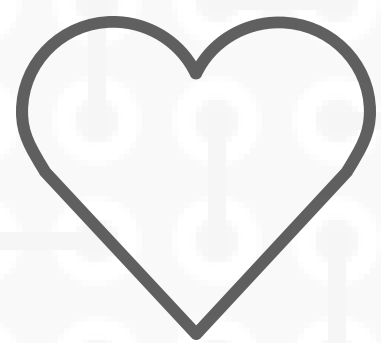
— Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five

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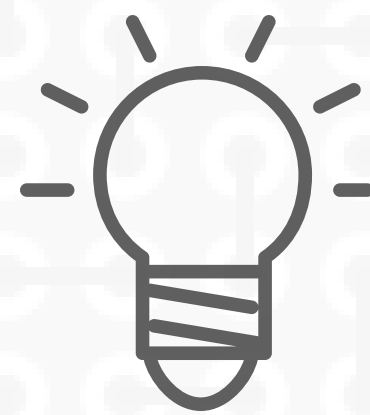


# 03 Daily physical activity has many benefits.

Participating in regular physical activity is an important strategy for preventing health issues later in life. The lifetime benefits of physical activity include:



Improved Heart Health



Enhanced Cognitive Ability



Increased Bone Density & Muscle Strength



Maintenance of Healthy Weight



Improved Psychological Well-Being



Greater Self-Esteem

It is not enough to just tell children physical activity is good for them – show them, explain the benefits to them, and become a good role model.



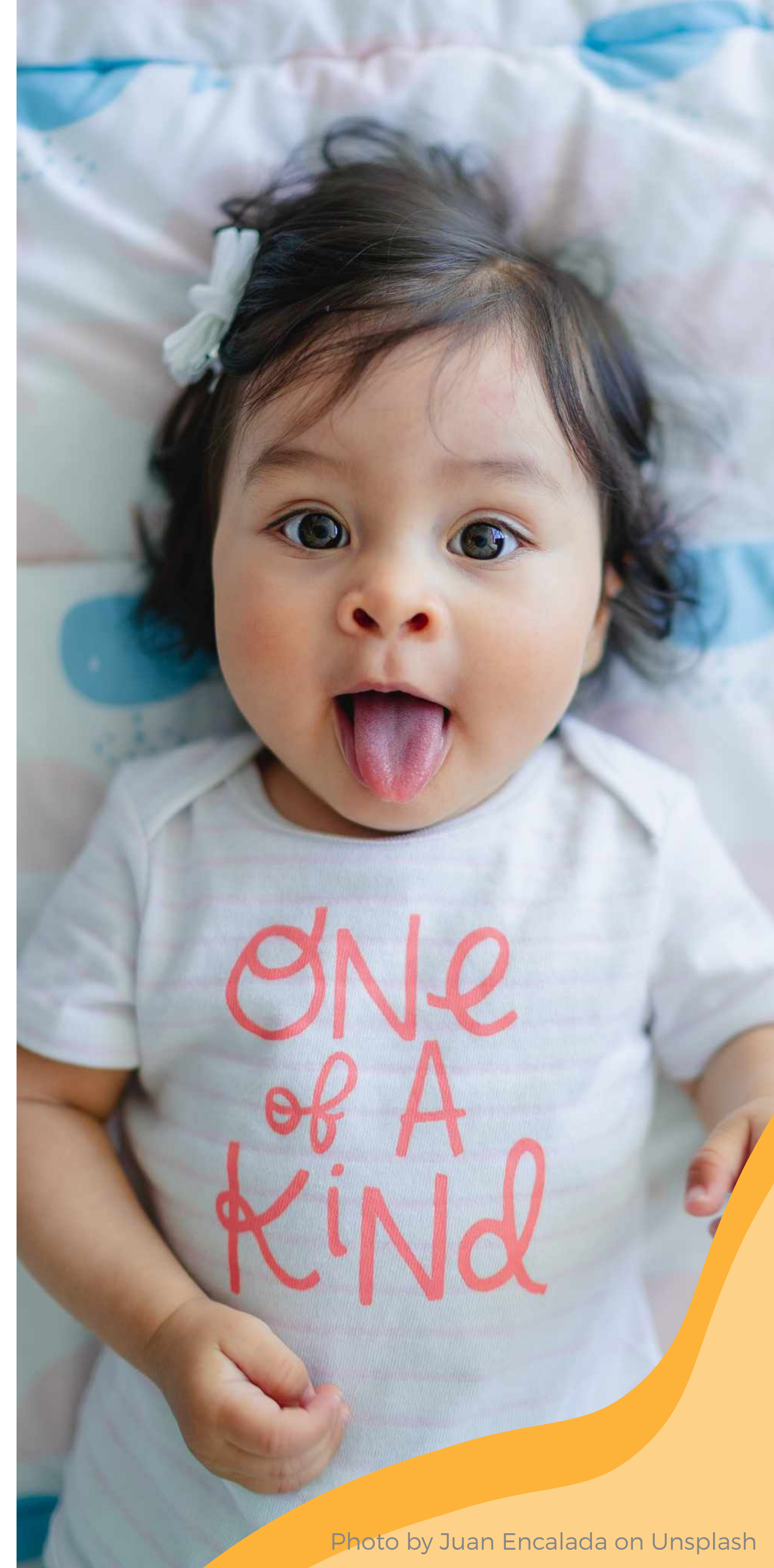
# 04 Infants

An appropriate physical activity environment provides unique and important opportunities to foster an infant's developing movement skills.

Exploring, repeating, and refining movements helps infants gain control over their bodies and provides the foundation for developing more skillful movement and motor performance in the toddler and preschool years.

- Infancy is also a critical time for developing brain-neuromuscular connections. Research shows that stimulating experiences, in which the infant participates actively, affect brain development positively.

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# 05 Toddlers

A new world of movement possibilities occurs when children no longer need to use their hands for stability or balance to walk upright.

With this increased opportunity for exploration and learning, toddlers will develop fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing, and kicking.

- Skills emerge and develop best when the child is exposed to a stimulating environment that includes regular structured and unstructured movement experiences that take into the account the child's physiological potential.





# 06 Preschoolers

Preschoolers are naturally active, and they gravitate toward physical activities that are enjoyable, and require refinement of fundamental skills and time to learn.

The need to provide structured movement and motor skill activities for children ages 3 to 5 is of critical importance. Research has found that preschool children who receive high-quality movement and motor skill instruction demonstrate significant improvements in their physical development.

Studies on brain development and child development indicate that the window of opportunity for developing large muscle skills is open the widest during the preschool.

[www.shapeamerica.org/ActiveStart](http://www.shapeamerica.org/ActiveStart)





07

# Good health habits for young children should start early and be fun!

SHAPE America's [Active Start e-book](#) lists the national guidelines for daily physical activity and aims to help young children develop the long-term attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that will help establish a set of core values for the importance of an active lifestyle.

Using a home, school and community approach, parents, caregivers, and preschools can work together to help support the health and well-being of all young children.



[View  
National Guidelines.](#)



# About SHAPE America

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators is a 501(c)3 organization advancing professional practice and promoting research related to health and physical education, physical activity, dance and sport.

SHAPE America serves as the voice for 200,000+ health and physical education professionals across the United States. Since its founding in 1885, the organization has defined excellence in health and physical education.

SHAPE America envisions a nation where **all children** are prepared to lead **healthy, physically active** lives.

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