



# ORTHOPÆDICS

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## Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage encourages children to make time for exercise

October is National Physical Therapy month. The American Physical Therapy Association has chosen "Exercise Your Options" as the theme for this year's Physical Therapy month. The theme encourages healthy and active lifestyles with an emphasis on the fitness level of children.

Oftentimes the fitness level of a child is overlooked due to parents being unaware of a child's activity levels, the busy schedules of everyone in a family and the presumption that simply being young is healthy.

Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage, a 15-physician orthopaedic practice, and its physical therapy department concur that getting enough exercise is crucial for children's weight control as well as for helping to prevent medical conditions from diabetes to osteoporosis.

"Fun and games is really a serious subject," said physical therapist Cindy Miles, PT, MEd, PCS, chairperson of the American Physical Therapy Association's Section on Pediatrics' Sports and Fitness Special Interest Group. "Children must engage in sustained exercise to stay fit and healthy."

The association supports the recommendation of the U.S. Surgeon General that children need 60 minutes of moderate physical exercise 4 to 5 days a week.

The Centers for Disease Control recommend "all children, from prekindergarten through grade 12, participate in quality physical education classes every school day."

According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, only 17 percent of middle and junior high schools and two percent of senior high schools require daily physical activity



**Children's exercise doesn't need to involve team sports. Active play with friends can help keep children fit.**

for all students. Parents need to be aware of the amount of activity a child receives in school in order to encourage appropriate activity levels outside of school.

It is important that parents and educators understand that sustained physical activity is critical to children achieving cardiovascular fitness, a key health indicator at any age.

In addition, physical activity is a significant factor in building bone mass and strength which can help to prevent or minimize the effects of osteoporosis later in life. Bone growth continues throughout our lives, but is critical in the early years as bone structure and length develop. Early bone development continues well into the teen years and is enhanced by physical activity.

Other health benefits of exercise include weight management, reducing the risk for heart disease, and helping to prevent type 2 diabetes, which studies have shown is on the rise in children who lead a sedentary lifestyle. Exercise also reduces stress levels and can alleviate a bad mood.

Exercise need not be limited to joining organized sports, although group sports appeal to many children. Kids may prefer being active by themselves or with a friend. Beneficial activities can include bicycling, jumping rope, walking the dog or even gardening. A simple game of tag can provide a great workout.

Parents should help kids avoid spending more than an hour at a time sitting. With the popularity of television, personal computers and computer games, many children are easily occupied for hours without any physical activity at all. The key is working to find something physical that each child enjoys and then to "mix it up" with other activities so they don't get bored. Exercise is even better as a family affair. Parents can plan family activities in a safe environment where children can have fun and find support and encouragement.

According to Miles, when the family stays active, it is much easier for the child to stay healthy and adopt a life-long healthy lifestyle.

"It is very difficult for children to develop healthy exercise habits and good nutrition without their parents' support," Miles said.

Miles recommends that parents and educators reward children for exercising with such things as a family activity or sports item, rather than with food or the promise of a sedentary activity. It is important to recognize that overweight or obese children have likely experienced past failures with exercise.

"The guidance of a physical therapist who understands the difficulties that children may be encountering, who monitors their progress with their par-



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ents, and who encourages them to persevere can often mean the difference between success and failure," Miles said.

The highly trained physical therapists at Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage are experts in the examination and management of musculoskeletal and neuromuscular conditions that affect people's abilities to move the way they want and to optimally function in their daily lives.

Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage's physical therapy clinicians specialize in the rehabilitation of patients with orthopaedic problems and can design treatment programs for a broad spectrum of performance levels. Exercise programs need to be directed individually with a focus on patient education and prevention of re-injury.

Following a detailed assessment, the cornerstones of physical therapists' intervention are therapeutic exercise

and functional training.

Physical therapists assess changes or deficits in movement, flexibility, strength, coordination, balance, general condition and function and then use manual therapy techniques, specialized exercise and education programs to assist the patient in a return to full function.

The physicians and physical therapists at Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage encourage all members of our community to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles and serve as positive influences on the lifestyles of children.

*This article was submitted by Therese Southworth, Licensed Physical Therapist and Manager of Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage's Rehabilitation Department. Serving patients at convenient locations in Warrenville, Wheaton, Carol Stream and Naperville, Orthopaedic Associates of*

*DuPage's board certified physicians provide expert care and treatment in the following nonsurgical and surgical areas of orthopaedics, including minimally invasive procedures: general orthopaedics; sports medicine; joint replacement/reconstruction; hand/wrist/elbow/upper extremity care; spine and neck disorders/scoliosis; foot and ankle; physiatry and workers' compensation. OAD's Rehabilitation Department offers comprehensive, on-site therapy services such as physical, occupational/hand and industrial services. OAD Rehabilitation's team of licensed therapists and certified athletic trainers provide full-service therapy programs for customized evaluation and treatment. For appointments and information, call OAD Rehabilitation at (630) 225-2466 or contact Orthopaedic Associates of DuPage at (630) 225-BONE (2663). Visit online at [www.orthodupage.com](http://www.orthodupage.com).*

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