

FORWARD CORNER

June is Sports America Kids Month!

Recent data from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Orthopedic Physical Therapy show the need for a stronger focus on health and wellness among American youth. Given these stats, it's important to start early, introducing children to physical activities they enjoy: activities they can be successful in and those that set them on a course for a lifelong interest in being active and successfully engaging in organized team and life sports.

- Over 80% of children do not participate in enough aerobic physical activity to meet standard youth guidelines.
- Only one in three children are physically active on a daily basis.
- Children spend upwards of seven and a half hours a day watching TV, playing video games or on a computer.

As we continue to transition out of COVID restrictions, summer is a great time to engage children in more frequent and vigorous outdoor activity. With time, age appropriate sports can help kids develop confidence, self-discipline, coordination, teamwork skills, and sportsmanship behavior, but for now, many experts recommend holding off on organized sports until children hit the age of five to seven (child specific). Toddlers and Preschoolers are beginning to master basic movements, but they're too young for most organized sports. They simply don't have the patience, the ability to wait, take turns, share or sit on the sidelines. Their little bodies may not be developed to perform the skills needed for some sports. And the pressure to perform is challenging for young ones. Instead, keep toddlers and preschoolers active with free play and age appropriate skill building activities. During the summer months get outside and explore. Encourage swimming, gymnastics, walking/hiking, bike-riding, tag, and even firefly/bugs/wind/bubble chasing with the little ones to keep it fun. Commit to lessons plans that include ways to develop basic gross motor skills that can help children be successful when they are ready to take on organized team sports later in childhood (tossing, kicking, throwing, batting, hitting, running, jumping, aiming, etc.).

Check out this curriculum for activities that build basic skills often used in team sports: [Healthy Movement and Active Play](#).

For your family bulletin board, post this Healthy Tips for Active Play: [English](#), [Spanish](#)

JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY BY TAKING ACTION!

June Call to Action for Families: Stop at the Dollar Store to purchase a beach ball, hula hoop, pool noodle, buckets, and sidewalk chalk to keep your children busy this summer. Click here for activities: [Beach Balls](#), [Pool Noodle](#), and [Sidewalk Chalk](#).

June Call to Action for Early Childhood Providers: Take time this month to celebrate the benefits of sports and organized team sports but to also educate your families on the limitations and even dangers of organized team sports early on.

For information on healthy eating and activity initiatives in DuPage, check out www.forwarddupage.org.