

TODAY'S FUTURE

When you give your children simple choices, you are teaching them how to make decisions

- Your children may want to choose what clothes they wear. Let them decide if they want to wear a blue shirt or a green shirt.
- Give them two choices for the vegetable at dinner. Make sure you have both on hand. It will frustrate them if you don't have the one they pick.

Physical Activity Hibernation

Two weeks ago a groundhog emerged to let the world know that there will be 6 weeks left of winter. While it may be an unreliable practice to use a groundhog for weather predictions (Punxsutawney Phil has seen his shadow 104 of the past 132 years), it is clear that our winter hibernation of outdoor exercise will last a few more weeks. Hibernation is defined as an extended period of remaining inactive or indoors. Unfortunately for most children in the United States, hibernation from physical activity continues long after the snow has melted. Deficits in the amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity, muscular strength, and physical literacy are contributing to the obesity epidemic that is spreading across the country.

The majority of children and adolescents are not accumulating the suggested 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity necessary to promote lifelong health and well-being. For years, the 60 minutes of physical activity threshold has been the benchmark for adolescent fitness. While most children

understand how many minutes per day they are supposed to be active, turning their concepts into actions is another story. Contemporary youth are more familiar with the latest video game or phone app, than they are with proper gross motor skills like catching and throwing. Physical inactivity among youth needs to be treated with the same energy as a hypertensive child (high blood pressure) or a teenage smoker. Intervention of low levels of physical activity can prevent the progression of acceptance towards a sedentary lifestyle.

Children need to participate in a balance of cardiovascular, muscular strength, and gross motor skill activities in order to develop movement competencies that will last into adulthood. Youth with low levels of muscular strength, power, and stamina are more likely to remain inactive, experience movement deficiencies, and have less confidence when participating in movement activities. When a child is unsuccessful in a sport or game, they view participation in that event or activity as undesirable. If an activity is undesirable as a child, it will be undesirable as an adult. A great example of an undesirable activity among most adults, is running. At some point in our lives, running changed from being an enjoyable activity with childhood friends, to an activity reserved for sports conditioning or punishment for mistakes made on the athletic field. Until exercise and movement are universally viewed as enjoyable health enhancing activities and not punishment, children and adults will continue to avoid regular participation in physical activity.

Together as a community, we can work together to change the way our children view physical activity. It is up to us to ensure that hibernation from outdoor physical activity is confined to the shadow of a groundhog and not a lifetime.

