

Never too young to b-active



There are currently no recognised activity guidelines for under-fives in the UK despite us having a national recommended amount for children aged five to 16, which is one hour a day.

However, in America there are exercise guidelines which start from birth. Their National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that infants up to 12 months are encouraged by parents and caregivers to safely explore their environment through daily physical activity to develop movement skills. Toddlers 12 to 36 months should accumulate at least 30 minutes of daily structured physical activity and that increases to 60 minutes daily for pre-schoolers aged three to five years.

Children develop at an exceptional rate during their first five years and physical activity is integral to building basic movement, communication, co-ordination, confidence, spatial awareness, control and other skills which are used in every part of a youngster's life.

Derby City Council's b-active campaign is focussing part of its work on this group of children, which starts with developing a programme over the summer for parents, carers, nurseries, children's centres, child minders, health visitors, midwives, toy libraries, and others to access from this Autumn.

This programme is in the early stages and the b-active team will work with Early Years Development and other partners across the city to ensure that the activities and training will support young children to develop suitable levels of physical activity.

The aim of this initiative is to encourage Derby's children to be active from the moment they can move and ideas currently being considered by the Council include the use of resource packs with ideas and cards for new parents, and

flexible programmes for nurseries, child minders and early years settings, which will provide a fun introduction to physical activity and integrate young children with disabilities.

Another proposal being explored is the development of swim bags to encourage babies and infants to gain water confidence in the bath and build their skills in the swimming pool. These bags will allow parents to safely explore water with their child through fun activities. Typically the bags will include waterproof interactive books, ducks, flip eggs (toy used to encourage children to blow bubbles) and idea cards. Swimming instructors at the Council's sport centres will support parents to use the bags in parent and toddler sessions.

There are many things parents can do to encourage young children to use up their energy and enjoy lively activities. The b-active top tips are:

- Swimming – lots of local pools including Moorways Swimming Pool, Queen's Leisure Centre and Woodlands Community School have parent and infant swim sessions where you can meet other parents. There are lots of fun toys and floats to help you develop your child's water confidence and an instructor is on hand to offer advice and support.
- Pre-school gym classes – Moorways, Shaftesbury and Springwood Leisure Centres provide Springtots classes to develop movement, balance and co-ordination skills in a fun, safe environment in sessions aged from nine months to five years.
- Soft play – Large squidgy shapes, ball pools and mini slides offer young children a creative way to be active. Centres across the city include Tubby Bear's Play Den in Great Northern Road, Bumpi's Big Adventure on Ascot Drive, Freddy's Play Kingdom in Spondon, Bazz and Jazz's Play Zone at The Bonnie Prince in Chellaston and Chucklebutties in Belper. Most run a parent and toddler session on weekday mornings.

- Parks – As well as using the selection of outdoor equipment and toys, why not have a game of hide and seek - play in an enclosed area so that your little one can't venture far!
- Indoor gym – move the chairs in your living room back against the wall and do indoor exercises, inspired by a bit of your child's favourite music.
- Garden games – make the most of your garden space and develop your own little activity course, using hoops, balls, trampets, mini slides and other outdoor toys. Frisbees, skittles (can be home made with empty plastic bottles and sand) and skipping can also be fun garden activities.
- In a space that is safe and hazard-free, allow infants to spend time lying on their front, back and sides; let them roll over, creep and crawl. Play gyms provide great stimulation for babies under 12 months.
- Be prepared – have a box at home and in the car with balls, a Frisbee, or a kite so that you will always be ready for action.