

Outdoors and Active

Top Tips for Physicality at Home

The [British Heart Foundation](#) recommends that children participate in at least three hours of physical activity every day in order to maintain fitness levels and a healthy weight. Some of this exercise needs to be vigorous and research suggests that people of all ages are more motivated if they exercise outdoors, in green environments. That's not always easy to achieve, so the Outdoors and Active project team tested a variety of ways to get children active at home. They judged that the **benefits of the activities outweigh the risks**, when caring adults support children:

- **Use the stairs** rather than the lifts or escalators
 - **Allow extra time** for local journeys on foot, so that children can explore their environment.
 - **Jumping up to and off** features such as seats and benches, low walls, play equipment, steps, fallen logs and flower bed borders
 - **Running and skipping** along pavements, or walking backwards
 - **Leaping** from one paving slab to another.
 - **Catching falling leaves** in their arms.
- **Make time to stroll** around your local area instead of driving or using a pushchair. If it's not possible to walk all the way to a destination, get off the bus one or two stops early, or park further away to give children every opportunity to move their bodies.
 - **Set up an indoor gym** – not with 'real' equipment but with whatever you have to hand. Make a circuit so that children can:
 - practise jumping and landing safely from a sofa or bed onto cushions
 - negotiate obstacles by climbing over or under chairs and up and down steps
 - wriggle over and under duvets
 - stretch their bodies by reaching up for objects suspended from the ceiling or curtain pole
 - spin on the spot or hula hoop (if you have the space!)
 - practise roly polys on blankets.
 - **In the garden or open spaces**, encourage vigorous, strength building activities such as
 - raking leaves, digging and other gardening tasks
 - pushing the pushchair or wheelbarrow
 - carrying a bag or backpack
 - climbing a tree (testing each branch for strength on the way up and back down!)
 - making a den from sticks, pegs and sheets.
 - **Eat outdoors** so that children are free to move and use the energy their food gives them, rather than being cooped up indoors.
 - Encourage children to **run and balance on varied terrain** such as up and down slopes, ramps and mounds to or accurately balance along a line (e.g. the edge of a pathway or playground markings)
 - **Go barefoot outdoors**. Children's feet are very sensitive, and have much growing still to do. Going without shoes is beneficial for foot development, and enhances children's awareness of posture, balance and position, helping them gauge surfaces, be more aware of their surroundings and improving sensory pathways between body and brain.

