

# GUIDELINES ON **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR AND SLEEP** | **FOR CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE**



World Health  
Organization



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**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY,  
SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR  
AND SLEEP** | **FOR CHILDREN  
UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE**

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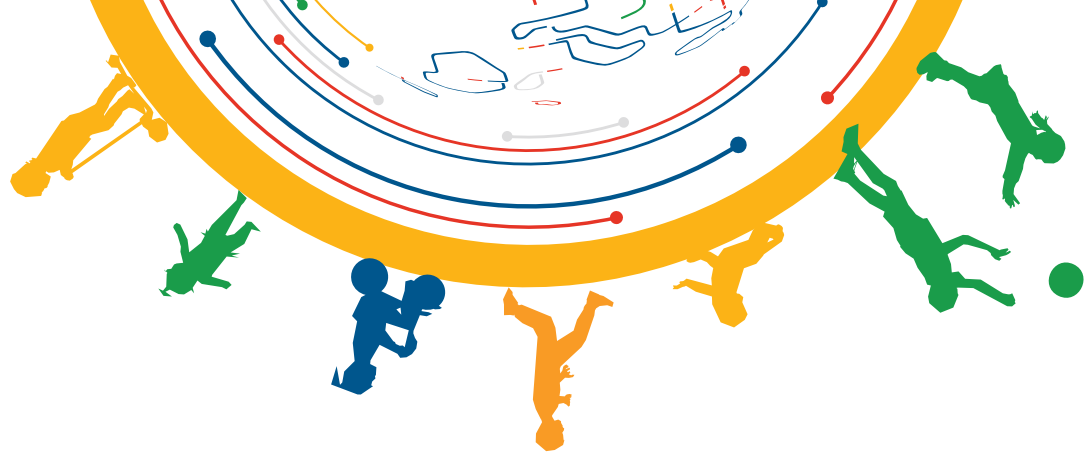
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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Abbreviation	Definition
<b>Adiposity</b>		Excessive fat accumulation in the body (overweight, obesity), as measured by BMI, BMI-for-age, BMI z-score, skinfold thickness, body fat mass.
<b>Body composition</b>		The proportion of fat and fat-free mass in the body. This can be measured as percentage body fat. Body mass index (see below) and waist circumference are proxies for body composition and in most situations, are good indicators of health risk associated with excess adiposity.
<b>Body mass index</b>	BMI	Weight (kg) / height (m) <sup>2</sup>
	BMI-for-age or BMI z-score	BMI adjusted for age, standardized for children. BMI standard deviation scores are measures of relative weight adjusted for child age and sex. Given a child's age, sex, BMI, and an appropriate reference standard, a BMI z-score (or its equivalent BMI-for-age percentile) can be determined.
<b>Cardiometabolic health</b>		The interplay of blood pressure, blood lipids, glucose and insulin on health.
<b>Cognitive development</b>		The process of learning, memory, attention, concentration and language development.
<b>Disability</b>		Term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions.
<b>Emotional regulation</b>		An individual's ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences such as stress, anxiety, mood, temperament, hyperactivity/impulsivity.
<b>Energetic play</b>		Active play that is equivalent to moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, when children get out of breath and feel warm. This may take many forms and may involve other children, caregivers, objects or not.
<b>Exercise</b>		Physical activity that is planned, structured, generally repetitive and has purpose.
<b>Fitness</b>		A measure of the body's ability to function efficiently and effectively in work and leisure activities and includes, for example, physical fitness and cardiorespiratory fitness.
<b>Floor-based play</b>		Supervised play for infants, where children move on the floor and develop motor skills.
<b>Infant</b>		Child aged less than one year, for the purposes of studies aged 0–11.9 months.
<b>Interactive activities</b>		Activities with a parent or caregiver that do not involve screens as a mode of entertainment. These can include reading, singing, storytelling, colouring, block building, cutting out, puzzles and games.
<b>Interactive play</b>		See "Play". Interactive play is play with a parent or caregiver where the child and adult/older child interact and engage in play for both cognitive and motor learning.
<b>Light-intensity physical activity</b>	LPA	LPA is equivalent to 1.5–4 METs in children, i.e., activities with energy cost 1.5 to 4.0 times the energy expenditure at rest for that child. For young children, this can include slow walking, bathing, or other incidental activities that do not result in the child getting hot or short of breath.
<b>Metabolic equivalent of task</b>	MET	The metabolic equivalent of task, or simply metabolic equivalent, is a physiological measure expressing the energy cost (or calories) of physical activities. One MET is the energy equivalent expended by an individual while seated at rest.



Term	Abbreviation	Definition
Moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity	MVPA	Moderate PA is equivalent to 4–7 METs in children, i.e., 4–7 times resting energy expenditure at rest for that child. Vigorous PA is equivalent to >7 METs. For young children, this can include brisk walking, cycling, running playing ball games, swimming, dancing etc. during which the child gets hot and breathless. See “Energetic play”.
Motor development		Development of a child’s musculoskeletal system and acquisition of gross motor skills (sometimes referred to as fundamental movement skills), and fine motor skills, including object control.
Nap		Period of sleep, usually during the daytime in addition to usual night time sleep.
Non-screen-based sedentary time		Usually refers to time spent sitting, not using screen-based entertainment. For young children, this includes lying on a mat, sitting in a high-chair, pram or stroller with little movement, sitting reading a book or playing a sedate game.
Physical activity	PA	Movement of the body that uses energy over and above resting. For young children, this can include walking, crawling, running, jumping, balancing, climbing in, through and over objects, dancing, riding wheeled toys, cycling, jumping rope etc.
Play		Play is defined as being for its own sake (without a specific goal), voluntary, enjoyed by participants and imaginative. It can be solitary or social, and with or without objects. Young children acquire and consolidate developmental skills through playful interactions with people and objects.
Pre-school child		Child aged 3 to under 5 years (36.0–59.9 months).
Prone position		Child lying on their front. See “tummy time”.
Psychosocial health		Include mental, emotional and social dimensions of health.
Restrained		Time when an infant or child is strapped or harnessed in a pram, stroller, high chair, or on an adult’s body (front or back) and unable to move freely.
Sedentary screen time		Time spent passively watching screen-based entertainment (TV, computer, mobile devices). Does not include active screen-based games where physical activity or movement is required.
Sedentary behaviour		Any waking behaviour characterized by an energy expenditure $\leq 1.5$ metabolic equivalents (METs), while in a sitting, reclining or lying posture. For children under 5 years of age includes time spent restrained in car seat, high-chair, stroller, pram or in a carrying device or on a caregiver’s back. Includes time spent sitting quietly listening to a story.
Sleep behaviour		Duration and timing of sleep. For children under 5 years of age includes both at night and daytime naps.
Toddler		Child aged 1 to under 3 years (12.0–35.9 months).
Tummy time		Time an infant spends lying on their front (in prone position) while awake with unrestricted movement of limbs.

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