

## How Does Physical Activity Help Your Body? Lesson Idea

### Objective

- Recognize the role of physical activity in helping the body grow strong and stay healthy.

### Prepare

- You may wish to prepare the picture cards ahead of time.
- Download and print [Activity Checkup](#) Activity Sheet for class distribution.

### Materials

- Old magazines (especially sports and fitness publications) and newspapers, [Activity Checkup](#) Activity Sheet, masking tape, plastic jars or bottles and metal cans of various weights

### Explore

1. Using old magazines, catalogs and newspapers, have children help you find pictures of people doing different physical activities. Stress that physical activity includes not only sports, but also household chores, yard work, games—anything that makes a person move his or her body. (Make sure the pictures include people of all ages, all races and both genders.) Have children paste the pictures on cardboard or heavy paper to make a set of picture cards.

Point to each picture card in turn. What is the (man, woman, boy, girl) doing in this picture? *Have you ever done this activity? Do you know how this activity is done?* Ask volunteers to demonstrate some of the movements involved in the activity. Then ask children what parts of the body are used in those movements.

*How can these activities help your body?* If children do not make the connection between physical activity and body health, point out that physical activity—any kind of physical activity—can benefit the body. Among other things, it strengthens the muscles, makes the body systems work more efficiently and can relieve stress (pressure). See whether children can add to this list.

2. Distribute the [Activity Checkup](#) Activity Sheet. Explain that they are to list any physical activity they do over the next several days. Next to the name of the activity, they are to write how often they do the activity (every day, twice a week, only on Tuesdays) and how long they do the activity (one hour, about 10 minutes). Remind children that they can list any activity as long as it makes them move their bodies.
3. Point out that different physical activities, or exercises, help the body in different ways. For example, some exercises help keep the body flexible, or easy to bend. Have children test their flexibility with this activity:

*Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you. Lean forward slowly and try to touch your toes with your fingers. Remember exactly how far you were able to stretch. Now stand up and put one leg out straight behind you with the foot flat on the floor. Lean forward slightly. Do the same for the other leg. Now sit on the floor and try to touch your toes again. How much farther can you stretch this time?*

Children will find that with their leg muscles stretched, their flexibility increases and they can reach farther.

4. Explain that some exercises help strengthen muscles; that is, the muscles can do more at one time. Other exercises increase their endurance; that is, the muscles can do something for a longer time. Have children test their arm strength and endurance with this activity:

Holding jars or cans in hands, bend elbows toward shoulders, as if lifting weights, 3-4 times. Increase the weight (size) of the jar or can; have children repeat the motion.

Point out that the stronger their muscles, the easier it is to lift the heavier weight. Ask them which was easier to lift. By continuing to lift "weights," their muscles will become stronger (building strength) and they will be able to lift heavier weights for a longer period of time (endurance). Point out that activities such as chin-ups, push-ups and weight lifting can make arm muscles stronger also.

5. Explain that some exercises help keep the heart and lungs healthy. When the lungs and heart are fit, they work more efficiently together and people can do more without tiring. Have children jump and be prepared to regulate their jumping speed:

*Jump slowly for one minute. Jump fast for one minute. After each minute, check pulse or note how children are feeling.*

After the activity, ask children how they feel. Have them note how breathless or warm they feel and how fast their hearts are beating. Point out that these increases in speed and activity show that the increased exercise made their hearts and lungs work harder.