

## Exploring...

# The importance of physical activity in the early years

The first five years of life are fundamental to children's growth and development. A number of physical and psychological developments occur in young children, which lay the foundation for future health and wellbeing.



During the early years, physical activity impacts on children's health and plays a key role in:

### Building strong muscles and bones

Active children have the opportunity to enhance bone health and muscular development.



### Maintaining a healthy weight

Physical activity can help prevent overweight and obesity by helping to maintain energy balance.



### Optimal brain development

Being active helps young children to develop important brain structures to help creativity, problem solving and memory.



### Establishing healthy habits for life

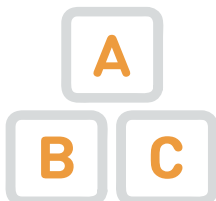
Physical activity patterns established in the early years persist at a moderate level into primary school and potentially later life.

### Developing motor skills

Being active helps young children's balance, co-ordination and mobility.

### Developing a strong heart

Being active may help young children maintain a healthy blood cholesterol level and blood pressure.



### Learning personal, social and emotional skills

Physical activity can help children develop the skills that help them solve problems, develop resilience, be confident, co-operate and interact with other children, eg, take turns while playing or caring about others.

### Supporting achievement and attainment

Being active can help young children successfully complete tasks and reach their goals.

For further information please see the BHFNC early years evidence briefing available on our website

[www.bhfactive.org.uk/early-years-resources-and-publications](http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/early-years-resources-and-publications)