

How Much Playtime Does Your Child Really Need?

That's the only sort of play time this generation knows, thanks to increasing concerns in the way our society functions enforcing kids to remain indoors. But we're not talking about that playtime. We're talking about the time during which a child gets to play freely using her body and mind without the pressures of coaching or winning.

For children who are inactive for most parts of the day, this playtime becomes critical for their health and well being. Children tend focus, eat, sleep and function better when playtime is introduced into their day. Serious issues like childhood obesity can be brought under control if playtime is an integral part of a child's day and life.

This brings us to the important question.

So how much playtime does your child really need?

The answer is fairly simple and straightforward. On average children today need 30-60 minutes of 'play time' everyday. This does not mean an hour of intense exercise or sport everyday where the child is exerted beyond her comfort levels. This only means you bring in a healthy mix of fun games with friends, sports that the child enjoys, free play at the playground and, if necessary, some light or moderate structured activity.

This sort of a routine where at least one hour of play time is a part of a child's routine has many benefits:

- Obvious health benefits of being physically and mentally active
- You are laying the foundation for a child who will grow up to be an activity loving adult, who enjoys being physically active as a part of his everyday life.
- Better bonds are formed with your child when you spend time playing with them.
- Playing outdoors connects children better with nature and they learn to adapt better to

various weather conditions.

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Your child works better as a team and moves well with peers.

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Kids going through puberty will benefit from structured play time as it will help them build positive body image and handle better the emotions and confusions of adolescence.

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Children learn problem solving skills and think quickly on their feet with playing a structured sport or game.

As parents who grew up at a time when mobile phones weren't as common as today, it is difficult to understand the struggles that today's generation goes through with finding the time and space to play. Plus with safety being a concern children are left with very little choices. Remember the old adage 'All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy'? Today it has to be modified as 'All work and no play, makes Jack a dull, unhealthy and possibly overweight boy'.

So, be smart and choose wisely for your children. Surround them with a good peer group. Research and find safe spaces to play. Make time at least once a week to turn into a child yourself and play with your kid. Encourage your child to move as much as possible or play a sport.

Good habits today will make them choose a fit and active life throughout their life!