Perspective

Being active is essential for children to properly develop as they grow. From 5 to 11 years old, children begin to learn structured games and sports such as soccer, hockey, dance, basketball, and others. At this stage of development, physical activity is all about maintaining strength, endurance, and bodyweight. It can also contribute to better recovery after treatments and facilitate re-integration to school.

Keeping your child active can decrease fatigue, improve quality of life, maintain heart health, improve functional abilities, maintain or improve flexibility, and support bone health.

It’s important to have fun: play soccer or hockey together, dance to their favourite song, do some no-contact karate (even if you’re not exactly a blackbelt)—set some goals! Creating an obstacle course with your child can be a really fun way to get them moving.
Recommendations

Children at this age should be active 60 minutes a day if possible. This can be divided into several short periods throughout the day.

The intensity of the activity can vary from moderate to vigorous. Use the following scale to help you measure fatigue.

**Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale (0-10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>exhaustion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>very, very hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>very hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>somewhat hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>fairly light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>very light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>very, very light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>at rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **SO DIFFICULT I HAVE TO STOP**

9. **VERY, VERY HARD**

8. **VERY HARD**

7. **HARD**

6. **IT'S PRETTY DIFFICULT NOW**

5. **IT'S GETTING MORE DIFFICULT**

4. **I'M STARTING TO FEEL IT**

3. **EASY**

2. **VERY EASY**

1. **VERY, VERY EASY**

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Another easy way to assess intensity is by paying attention to breathing and ability to speak during exercise:

- Is it easy to speak during the activity? That means the intensity level is moderate.
- Is it hard to hold a conversation? That means the intensity level is high.

High-intensity exercise is important, but it should be briefer and less frequent. Moderate-intensity exercise can be done every day.

Safety

Physical activity during treatment is not harmful if you pay attention to specific signs. Stop and postpone physical activity if your child shows evidence of:

- Nausea
- Onset or increase in pain
- Vertigo or dizziness
- Palpitations or chest pain

Exercise caution:

Children with low platelet levels:
Avoid activities where there is a risk of falling or the child must catch things. Instead:

- Choose games played on the ground
- Roll objects slowly

Children with a low level of neutrophils:
Avoid cloth toys, wash toys before play, and wash the child’s hands after play. Instead:

- Choose plastic toys

Children with low hemoglobin
Avoid high-intensity games and activities where they must bend over or hold their breath. Instead:

- Promote games where the child doesn’t move all around or is seated
- Watch for signs of fatigue and allow for rest periods

Children with low blood sugar levels who cannot eat (blood tests, etc.):

- Choose very low-intensity activities
- Postpone the activity until after they have eaten
Make every step count
Adding brisk movement is one way of increasing children’s daily amount of physical activity (walking, climbing stairs, cycling, etc.).

Minimize sedentary activities
Seated activities should be limited at 2 hours a day when possible. For example: games on tablets or cell phones, shows and movies, reading, and others.

Drinking water is important
Always have a water bottle on hand. Children must be kept well hydrated if they are active, especially during treatment.

Sleep
Especially during growth periods, children need lots of sleep—even in the daytime.

Doctor’s guidance
It is important to talk with the attending physician about other recommendations for your child and adapt the level and type of physical activity your child can do.

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