

FOCUS

ON THE FAMILY

- Bullying signs and prevention tips

- Mental health awareness for new moms

- Exercise guidelines for the whole family





The latest exercise guidelines for the family

For the past 16 years, the Physical Activity Guidelines have been a vital resource for health professionals and policy makers, serving as a foundation for physical activity and education programs.

These guidelines – established and periodically adjusted by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion – include recommendations for individuals ages three and over.

A full breakdown of the latest guidelines can be found at [Health.gov](https://www.health.gov), but the following are some highlights pertaining to various groups:

Preschool-aged children: The ODPHP notes that children between the ages of three and five should be physically active throughout the day to enhance their growth and development. Caregivers are urged to encourage active play that includes activities of various types.

Children and adolescents: Children between the ages of six and 17 should engage in 60 minutes or more per day of moderate-to-vigorous aerobic physical activity. Kids in this age group also should engage in vigorous-intensity physical activity at least three days per week. Regimens also should include muscle-strengthening activities and bone-strengthening activities at least three days per week.

Adults: The ODPHP urges adults to sit less and move more. The most substantial health benefits can be gained by engaging in at least 150 minutes to 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity or between

75 minutes and 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week. Any equivalent combination of the two can suffice as well. Muscle-strengthening activities also should be part of adults' fitness regimens. These activities should help to strengthen all the major muscle groups, and adults should aspire to engage in them at least two days per week.

Older adults: Older adults who can still follow the guidelines designed for younger adults can continue to do so. But the ODPHP recommends that older adults also incorporate multicomponent physical activity in their workout regimens. This can include balance training to complement aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities. Older adults also are urged to discuss with their physicians how any chronic conditions they may have can affect their ability to safely engage in physical activity.

Safe physical activity

To do physical activity safely and reduce risk of injuries and other adverse events, the guideline suggests people should do the following:

- Understand the risks yet be confident that physical activity can be safe for almost everyone.
- Choose types of physical activity that are appropriate for their current fitness level and health goals because some activities are safer than others.
- Increase physical activity gradually

over time to meet key guidelines or health goals. Inactive people should “start low and go slow” by starting with lower intensity activities and gradually increasing how often and how long activities are done.

- Protect themselves by using appropriate gear and sports equipment, choosing safe environments, following rules and policies, and making sensible choices about when, where, and how to be active.

- Be under the care of a health care provider if they have chronic conditions or symptoms. People with chronic conditions and symptoms can consult a health care professional or physical activity specialist about the types and amounts of activity appropriate for them.

Activity benefits

Evidence for the benefits of physical activity has continued to grow since the guidelines were initially published. Here are just a few of the recently identified benefits:

- Improved bone health and weight status for children ages 3 through 5 years.
- Improved cognitive function for youth ages 6 to 13 years.
- Reduced risk of cancer at a greater number of sites.

- Brain health benefits, including possible improved cognitive function, reduced anxiety and depression risk, and improved sleep and quality of life.

- For pregnant women, reduced risk of excessive weight gain, gestational diabetes, and postpartum depression.

- For older adults, reduced risk of fall-related injuries.

- For people with various chronic medical conditions, reduced risk of all-cause and disease-specific mortality, improved physical function, and improved quality of life.

The Physical Activity Guidelines can serve as a useful resource for people of all ages as they look to live a healthy lifestyle. For more information, including access to the complete guidelines, visit [health.gov](https://www.health.gov).

(METRO CREATIVE)

Though initially established years ago, the Physical Activity Guidelines are periodically adjusted by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Recommendations are included for 3-year-old children through older adults, along with tips on how to safely engage in physical activity to reduce the risk of injuries.

Exploring the pathways to adoption

Adoption can be both exciting and overwhelming. The types of adoption may seem confusing, and you may feel unprepared to parent a child who has experienced separation and loss.

As you explore the different pathways to adoption, you will begin to understand how you can benefit from building and adjusting your knowledge, attitude, and parenting techniques related to the emotional, developmental, social, and physical needs of the child you adopt, according to the Children Welfare Information Gateway.

CWIG is a service of the Children’s Bureau within The Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It provides publications, resources and learning tools selected by experts on a wide range of topics including adoption.

Its publication “Exploring the Pathways to Adoption” begins by addressing the topic of making the decision to adopt.

“Adoption is a lifelong process. When deciding whether to pursue adoption, it is important to evaluate your motivations and assess how your skills and strengths can enhance the life of a child,” it states.

“Exploring your willingness to change your home environment to incorporate the needs of your adoptive child is also essential as is making an informed decision about the ages of children you can effectively parent,” it states. This involves consideration of the developmental behavior of children in various stages of life.”

Agencies and services

A licensed, public or private adoption agency or individual (e.g., an adoption attorney) may provide adoption services, such as identifying children and youth eligible for adoption, making determinations about their best interests, and conducting or arranging a home study on prospective adoptive parents.

“You should look for a reputable agency or authorized individual who understands your family’s values, priorities, and abilities to care for children eligible for adoption,” it states.

Many public and private adoption agencies offer free orientation sessions to present an overview of their services and answer questions you may have.

Asking questions and attending sessions at a variety of agencies is important for gathering as much information as possible and does not obligate you to use the services of those agencies or individuals.

A licensed adoption agency or individual will also ensure that necessary documentation is provided for filing. An attorney will need to be involved if only to file the documents and schedule the court hearing.

If you decide that adoption is right for your family, one of the first decisions many prospective adoptive parents make is whether they have the ability



When deciding whether to pursue adoption, it’s important to evaluate motivations and assess how your skills and strengths can enhance the life of a child, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau. To guide those who decide to pursue adoption, the bureau provides a variety of publications, resources and learning tools.

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to meet the needs of a child born in the United States (domestic adoption) or in another country (intercountry adoption). Love goes a long way, but children who have been adopted need families who understand the effects of trauma and how to help their child come to terms with complex feelings.

Regardless of the type of adoption you pursue or whether you work with an agency or attorney, nearly all prospective adoptive families are required to complete a home study, which is an assessment of the parent or parents, prior to being

considered for placement of a child or youth. The process is subject to change and varies considerably from state to state depending on laws and policies for approving prospective families.

Foster care adoption

All public and private providers of adoption services follow the same rules and standards set by each state’s public child welfare system. Some states contract with private agencies to provide foster and adoptive services for children

in foster care. You can check with your public child welfare agency to identify potential adoption agencies.

Thousands of children and youth are waiting in foster care for adoptive families. Children in foster care have been removed from their families for a variety of reasons, including abuse or neglect, and they may have experienced trauma as a result. These children range in age from infants to teenagers.

According to data from the national Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, the average age of a child waiting to be adopted from the U.S. foster care system is 8 years old. Children ages 8 and up – especially older youth, children of color, sibling groups, and children with disabilities – often wait longer than other children for adoptive families.

Adoptions from foster care are usually free or have minimal fees because they’re funded by the state. Public agencies – and private agencies contracted by public agencies – locate and prepare adoptive families to adopt children from foster care. In public agency adoptions, adoption matches are generally arranged by the agency through a meeting of several social workers and supervisors and/or by a placement committee and are based on the needs of the child and the ability of the family to meet those needs.

Adopting from foster care requires you to enhance your existing parenting skills and develop new ones to successfully care for children who have experienced separation and loss and some who have also experienced trauma. To be effective, this involves dedicated time and effort.

As a foster parent, you will foster children who have identified permanency goals such as reunification or adoption. Reuniting children with birth families is almost always the preferred first goal in child welfare, and in these cases foster parents work with agency social workers to support a child’s safe return home.

When children cannot be safely reunified, their plan can change to adoption. As their foster parent, you likely would be offered the opportunity to adopt.

There are also thousands of children and youth in need of placement who are already legally free for adoption because parental rights have been relinquished or terminated. Typically, in these cases, a child or youth will be placed with you with the goal of adoption, and you will work with a social worker to prepare for adopting that child.

Adoption from foster care is not limited to adoption from your immediate area or even your state. You may view online adoption exchanges, which are organizations that connect families with children in foster care waiting to be adopted.

Private agency

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Signs your child might be experiencing bullying

Bullying continues to be a major problem across the country. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that one out of every five students report being bullied. More concerning is that many people do not admit to it occurring, so bullying might be even more prevalent than statistics indicate.

The primary reasons for being bullied include physical appearance, race or ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation.

In the past, bullying may have ceased when students left school. But since the internet and digital devices provide round-the-clock exposure and access, bullying now takes places even after school hours through social media posts and texts.

Students who experience bullying may be susceptible to anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Discovering the signs of bullying early on may help students get the help they need. Parents and other adults may not be sure how to identify signs a child is being bullied.

Here are signs that could indicate a child is being bullied.

Reluctance to go to school: Students being bullied may make excuses to stay home, such as saying they are sick.

Frequent calls from the school nurse for early pickups also may occur.

Mood changes: Children may appear sad, moody, teary, or depressed more often than usual.

Changes in friendships: Loss or changes of friends could be signs of bullying. A reluctance to hang out in a once familiar social circle could signal bullying is taking place within that group.

Bad dreams or trouble sleeping: Bullying could cause worry at night or subconsciously while a child is dreaming, interrupting sleeping patterns.

Intense emotional reactions: Kids who have intense emotional reactions to school or social activities could be indicators that bullying is occurring. Although children may not always be able to articulate their feelings, excessive emotions concerning certain topics may be red flags.

Signs of physical abuse: By and large a majority of bullying tends to lean toward the verbal and emotional. However, RaisingChildren.net, a parenting website, reports bruises, cuts, scratches, torn clothing, or missing property might be indicators of physical bullying.

Withdrawal from devices: Students being bullied online or over social media may decide not to use mobile phones or gaming systems as frequently as they once did.

Maintaining an open dialogue with a child may help him or her feel more comfortable, which can lead to the child sharing details of bullying at school or elsewhere.

(METRO CREATIVE)



Discovering the signs of bullying early on – including mood changes, withdrawal from devices, reluctance to go to school and changes in friendships – may help students get the help they need.

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What parents can do to prevent bullying

Bullying affects children from all walks of life. Whether the student is on the receiving end of bullying or is the aggressor, parents and other adults will sometimes need to step in to provide assistance.

Although there is no magic formula to preventing bullying, parents can do their part to put a stop to such behaviors.

• Parent authoritatively: According to developmental psychologist Diana Divecha, contributor to Greater Good magazine, an authoritative style of parenting offers high levels of warmth, love and closeness, while at the same time providing clear limits and high expectations. Children who are raised with this type of parenting often fare the best with better mental health and stronger relationship skills. Children who are parented harshly may be more likely to become bullies or be bullied themselves.

• Be knowledgeable and observant: Parents, teachers and administrators should keep their eyes peeled for bullying behaviors and reactions. Various signs indicate bullying is taking place, and these include being introverted, commonly reporting illness, withdrawing from daily activities, or having trouble sleeping.

• Nurture a positive household climate: Parents and other family members can work together at home to create an organized and predictable environment. Parents should model the type of behavior they want their children to express.

• Teach children coping skills: Practice scenarios at home where a child learns how to ignore a bully or develop assertive strategies for coping with bullying. Share who children can go to for help, apart from you, such as teachers or administrators, if they're worried about being bullied.

• Set technology boundaries: Bullying can take place on social media, and by monitoring online activity, parents may be able to head off potential bullying problems. Document online bullying so it can be addressed with administrators or law enforcement.

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ADOPTION • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

parents relinquish their parental rights, and adoptive parents work with an agency to adopt. Agencies are required to adhere to licensing and procedural standards.

Agencies provide trainings for prospective parents and many offer support groups. Some agencies may also have therapists or counselors on staff to help adoptive families address issues they may experience before or after an adoption has been finalized.

Many prospective parents work with private agencies to adopt infants. Waiting times for infant adoptions vary tremendously and can take several years or more. Private adoption agencies may set specific eligibility criteria for prospective adoptive parents seeking infant adoption, and adoptive parents typically incur more costs than they do in public agency adoptions.

Independent adoption

In an independent adoption, attorneys assist prospective adoptive parents and birth parents with the adoption process, which usually involves the adoption of an infant. Families adopting independently often identify the expectant parents (or the expectant mother) without an agency's help. In some cases, the attorney may identify expectant parents who are seeking an adoptive family. Each family's situation is different; it is impossible to predict the length of time you may wait for a child.

Infants usually are placed with the adoptive parents directly from the hospital after birth. As with private agency adoptions, State laws differ about the timing of the birth parents' consent and

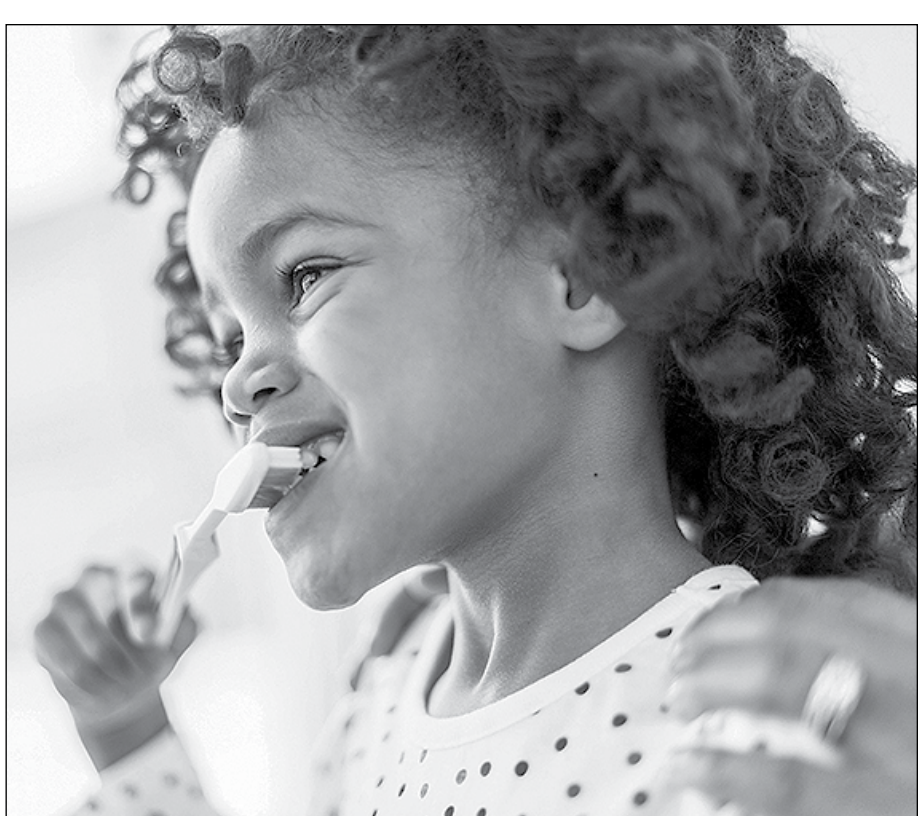
the conditions and timing of the birth parents' right to revoke that consent, but there is always the possibility that birth parents will decide to parent when the baby is born. The birth parents are the child's legal parents until they consent to the surrender of their parental rights.

If you decide to choose independent adoption, you will interact with the expectant parents or their attorney. Birth parents typically provide written consent for the adoption that must be approved by the court. Attorneys who facilitate independent adoptions must adhere to the standards of the American Bar Association and any applicable state and federal laws.

Deciding to adopt and exploring what type of adoption to pursue is a journey that involves understanding and navigating the different pathways that are available to you. Licensed and authorized adoption providers can help you understand the adoption process and the needs of children who are eligible for adoption. You will receive help to determine whether your family has the capability to meet those needs and to access valuable training and support.

When you find the pathway that is right for you, your adoption provider will help you through every step of the adoption process. Whether you adopt an infant or an older child, domestically or internationally, knowing about the different pathways to adoption and resources available can further prepare you for the joys and challenges of adopting and raising a child.

For more information, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway website at www.childwelfare.gov or call 1-800-394-3366.



Kids may or may not embrace the morning and nighttime routine of brushing their teeth, no matter how hard parents try to relate the benefits of doing so. But making oral hygiene a priority in childhood could potentially reduce the risk for various diseases as adults.

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The long-term effects of proper childhood dental care

Parents of young children are undoubtedly familiar with the morning and nighttime ritual of getting kids to brush their teeth. Kids may or may not embrace that routine no matter how hard parents try to relate the benefits of proper oral hygiene, but moms and dads can take solace in the knowledge that childhood dental care can have a positive and lasting effect on kids' overall health.

Dental care and heart disease

Harvard Health Publishing notes that numerous studies have now shown that people with poor oral health exhibit higher rates of cardiovascular issues, including heart attack and stroke. The reason behind that remains something of a medical mystery, but some theorize that bacteria that infects gums and causes conditions such as gingivitis and periodontitis trigger

an immune response, inflammation, that then contributes to vascular damage.

Dental care and Alzheimer's disease

The National Institute on Aging reports that a recent analysis published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* noted the bacteria that cause gum disease are also linked with the development of Alzheimer's disease. That analysis found that older adults with signs of periodontitis, a condition marked by inflammation of tissue around the teeth that can cause loosening of the teeth, were more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. Additional research is necessary before more concrete conclusions about the link between dental care and Alzheimer's disease can be made, but dental care that protects the gums could very well reduce individuals' risk for dementia.

Dental care and cancer risk

Cancer is among the leading causes of death across the globe, affecting people from all walks of life. Researchers at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health discovered a link between dental care and cancer risk. In a letter published in the journal *Gut*, researchers reported that they found that people with a history of gum disease have a higher risk of stomach and esophageal cancers than people with no such history. And that risk was not exactly minimal, as researchers reported a 43 percent higher risk for esophageal cancer and a 52 percent higher risk for stomach cancer.

An emphasis on lifelong oral hygiene in childhood could pay lasting dividends, potentially reducing kids' risk for various diseases when they reach adulthood.

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Mental health issues that could affect new moms

Pregnancy and giving birth to a new child is a happy time in a woman's life. However, 10 percent of pregnant women and 13 percent of women who have just given birth experience a mental disorder, says the World Health Organization.

The National Child & Maternal Health Education Program indicates pregnancy and a new baby can cause a range of emotions. Women may feel anxious or sad at various times.

For many women, such feelings resolve with time. For others, these emotions may become more serious and persist.

BABY BLUES

The name given to a common postpartum condition can give people the impression that it is nothing to worry about. Although the "baby blues" are something new mothers may have heard about, and generally produce mild symptoms, they can still be disconcerting.

This condition is marked by mood swings that are the result of fluctuating hormone levels during and immediately after childbirth. These feelings occur in up to 80 percent of new mothers, and occur approximately three to five days after delivery, says Mental Health America.

Women whose blues do not resolve when hormones level out, and, in fact, get worse with time, may not realize they have progressed to postpartum depression, which is a more serious situation that often

requires medical treatment.

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Johns Hopkins Medicine says one in five new moms has postpartum depression, a serious, but highly treatable, condition. Postpartum depression is the most common complication of pregnancy and can be life threatening. Postpartum depression is a factor in 20 percent of all maternal deaths, says Lindsay Standeven, M.D., of the Johns Hopkins Center for Women's Reproductive Mental Health.

Those who are at risk for postpartum depression include women who have histories of anxiety or mood disorders, a family history of postpartum mood disorders, and activity of certain genes, known as epigenetic biomarkers.

Postpartum depression can cause sadness, anxiety, anger, irritability, difficulty sleeping, and intrusive thoughts that may include thoughts of harming the baby.

POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS

In rare cases, women may experience postpartum psychosis, a condition that affects about one-tenth of one percent of new mothers, says MHA. Onset is quick and severe, usually within the first two to three weeks following childbirth.

Symptoms include refusal to eat; inability to cease activity and frantic energy; extreme confusion; memory loss;



According to experts, women who are pregnant or who have just given birth experience a myriad of emotions. They can range from mild symptoms marked by mood swings to rare cases that can be more severe. It's important family and friends are aware that these conditions can occur and encourage the woman seeks further care if warranted.

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incoherence; paranoia; and preoccupation with trivial things. Hospitalization may be considered for a woman with postpartum psychosis until her condition stabilizes.

Families and caregivers should be

aware that these conditions can occur following (and during) pregnancy. Therapy and medication can help women alleviate symptoms.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Enriching non-sports activities ideal for some kids

A school experience goes beyond lessons learned in the classroom. Part of what helps shape well-rounded students are the skills they sharpen and memories they make while engaging in extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular involvement shows that students can stick with activities for extended periods of time, indicates they have passions and interests, and illustrates that they can take initiative outside of their schoolwork.

Athletics is a popular extracurricular activity. A love of sports often develops in elementary school, with children participating in recreational or school-based leagues each year. That enjoyment of the game only builds in middle school and high school.

However, there are plenty of students who are not sports enthusiasts but still fill their after-school hours with activities that can help cultivate leadership, teamwork, time management skills, confidence, and much more.

Here are some extracurriculars that go beyond the scholastic playing fields.

- **Arts activities:** These can include painting, sketching, ceramics, jewelry-making, and yarn work.

- **Band or chorus:** Music instruction is ideal for those who want to explore a passion for singing or playing an instrument.

- **Theater:** Students can participate in theater productions after school. It's possible to get involved both in front of the curtain and behind with positions in the cast, crew and even promotional team.

- **Newspaper:** Many schools still produce student-led newspapers in print or digital versions. Students handle all the roles, from reporting, editing, photography, and managing the publication.

- **Foreign language clubs:** Students may



There are plenty of students who are not sports enthusiasts but can still fill their after-school hours with activities that can help cultivate leadership, teamwork, time management skills, confidence and more. There are a variety of options available including culinary arts, band and chorus, arts, coding and programming, foreign language clubs and theater.

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want to expand on their foreign language studies by participating in language clubs. Often these clubs include learning more about the cultures where specific languages are spoken, including exploring culinary delights and possible travel.

- **Philanthropy:** Like-minded students may want to participate in school-organized volunteer activities. These keep students busy, but also benefit recipients in

many ways. Activities can include beach sweeps or volunteering at animal shelters.

- **Coding and programming:** Students can learn the basics of writing code and building computer applications or websites.

- **Culinary arts:** Certain schools may be equipped with kitchen facilities and still offer elective courses in culinary arts, while others may reserve cooking classes

to extracurricular activities. If a school does not have a culinary club, chances are students can find a cooking class offered through a private group.

There are plenty of extracurricular activities to engage students who are not interested in athletics. Students also can start new clubs if there are deficits in offerings at their schools.

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