



Helsinki

Let everyday life move you

Nearly all school children exercise. However, only one third do so enough. Having a sports hobby doesn't automatically mean a sufficient level of physical activity. More movement is needed as a part of everyday life. Every step counts and contributes to well-being.

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Sports hobbies are becoming more common – the overall level of physical activity is decreasing

Physical activity and sports are the most popular hobbies among schoolchildren. More than 80 percent have a regular sports hobby on a weekly basis and more than 60 percent participate in a regular sports hobby in sports clubs. However, having a sports hobby doesn't guarantee a sufficient level of physical activity. Only some 30 percent of schoolchildren are physically active enough. According to the recommendations, schoolchildren must be physically active for 1–2 hours per day. Two physical training sessions per week only accounts for 10–15% of the minimum recommended level of physical activity. The heart of the problem is that physical activity is no longer a part of our everyday life, which we spend sedentary. On average, schoolchildren spend 7 hours and 17 minutes sitting per day. The well-being of children and young people improves when they spend more time cycling and walking, are physically active during breaks and lessons, choose to take the stairs instead of the lift and are provided with opportunities for different hobbies. Adults serve as examples for children and important enablers of physical activity.

We have put together some materials that will help you:

See

that daily physical activity is needed on top of sports and hobbies.

Discover the compilation of opportunities for physical activity available at

helsinki.fi

Realise

that you can be physically active not only during hobbies but also at school and when commuting and doing everyday tasks.

Recognise

the important role of guardians in their child's physical activity.

Understand

how much physical activity schoolchildren should get on a daily basis.

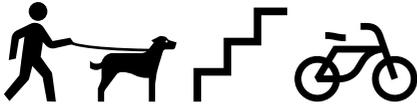
Notice

the health benefits of physical activity.

Two organized sports sessions per week account for 10–15 % of the minimum recommended level of physical activity.

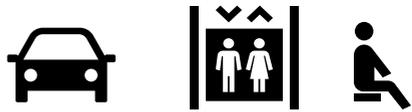
What does ‘sufficient physical activity’ mean?

Children and young people aged 7 to 18 should engage in varied physical activity for 1–2 hours per day, in a manner suitable for their age. It is important to avoid sitting for more than two hours at a time. Screen time should be limited to a maximum of 2 hours per day.



The following can help you meet the recommended level of physical activity:

- walking or biking to school
- going outside and playing with friends during breaks
- taking breaks from sitting during lessons
- travelling to hobbies by public transport and walking a part of the way
- taking the stairs instead of the lift
- engaging in recreational sports hobby after school
- participating in organized sports in the afternoon or evening
- casual play with friends in your neighbourhood
- walking the dog
- setting a target for time spent using smart devices and screens.



Low physical activity is explained by:

- getting a ride to and from school
- staying indoors during breaks
- taking the lift from one floor to another
- spending a lot of time on social media or playing games
- getting a ride to physical hobbies
- not having physical hobbies
- mostly meeting friends online.

Taking the stairs is equal to jogging as a physical activity.

A fifteen-minute journey to school accumulates two and a half hours of physical activity every week.

Sources include: Lasten ja nuorten liikuntakäyttäytyminen Suomessa [The Physical Activity Behaviours of Children and Adolescents in Finland] (2018); Lasten ja nuorten liikuntatuloskortti [Results of the Children’s and Adolescents’ Physical Activity Level Study in Finland] (2018)

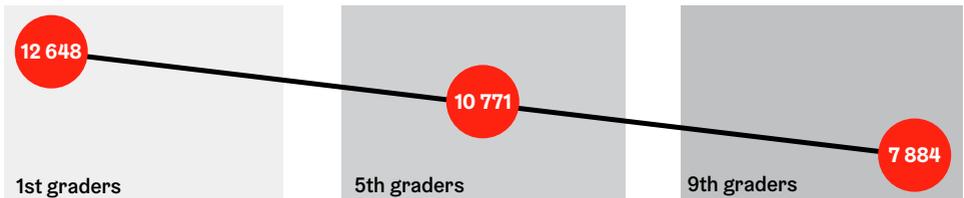
Physical activity drops over the school years – three core facts

Physical activity decreases with age. Children are the most physically active and spend the least time sitting at the start of their schooling. This situation completely reverses itself during comprehensive school. Among 9th graders, only 10 percent meet the recommended level of physical activity.

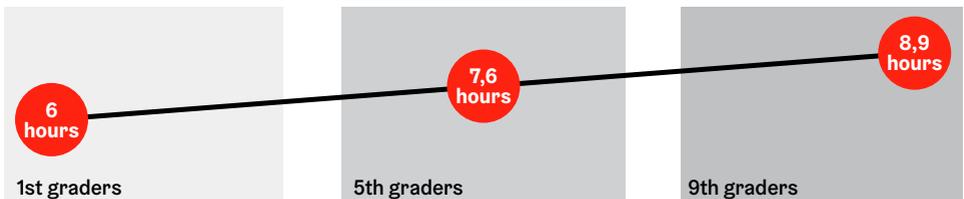
The differences in the level of physical activity are vast and polarized. Only a fraction of schoolchildren take more than 24,000 steps a day. Most children take far fewer steps, some as few as less than 3,000.

Ways of being physically active vary greatly. Some schoolchildren want to be physically active with others, while others prefer to do so alone. Some cycle and travel on foot in their everyday life. Some are motivated to get moving by a ball or friends. There is no one correct way to be physically active. Everyone is physically active in a way suitable for them.

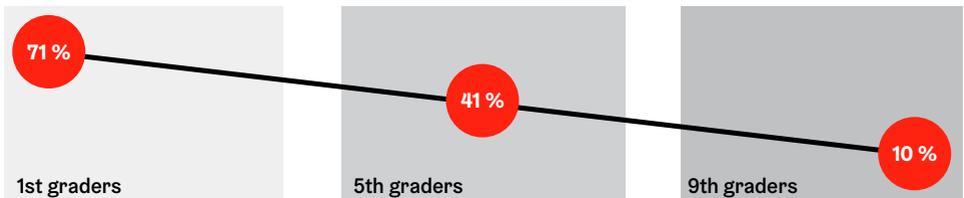
On average, the level of physical activity decreases by 4,700 steps during comprehensive school.



The amount of time spent sitting or lying down increases by roughly three hours during comprehensive school.



Only 10 percent of the 7th – 9th graders achieve the daily recommendation of one hour of brisk physical activity.



An active childhood is also an indicator for an active lifestyle later in life.

Your reason for being physically active doesn't matter – only that you keep moving

Ultimately, everyone is physically active for their own sake. Ranking the motivating factors is not important, as physical activity yields health benefits regardless of whether you're wearing jeans or tracksuit bottoms. The more brisk and regular the physical activity, the better the resulting health benefits are. Physical activity can be taken up gradually, starting with fifteen minutes per day, for example.

Benefits of physical activity

- You're happy, energetic and in a good mood.
- Your concentration, the well-being of your brain and the conditions for remembering and learning improve.
- The quality of your sleep improves
- Your muscle fitness and musculo-skeletal system strengthen.
- You maintain a healthy body.
- Physical symptoms decrease, such as pain in the neck, shoulders and back.
- Your mood improves and your anxiety is eased.
- You develop interpersonal skills.

What motivates you to exercise?

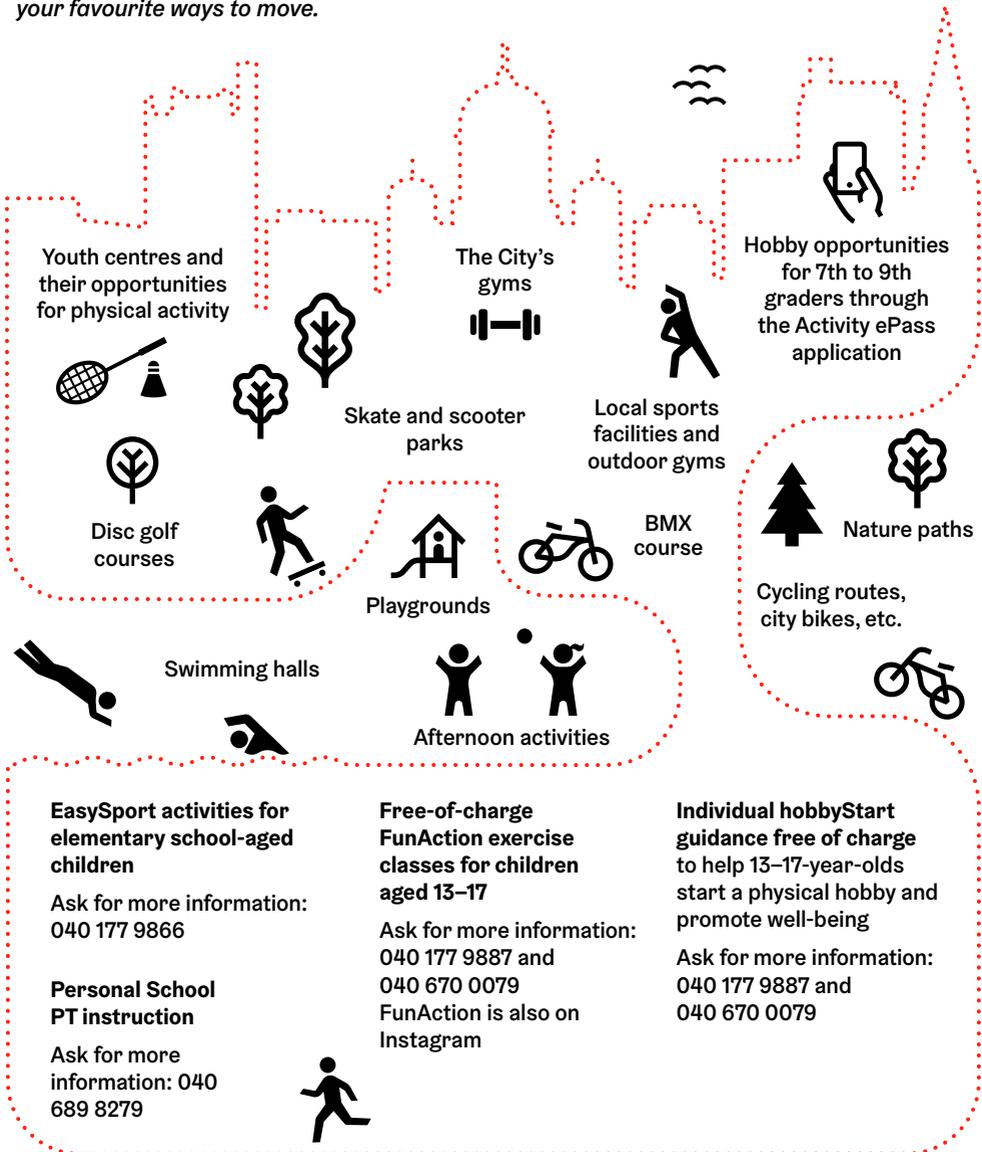
- trying your best
- joy – physical activity is fun
- feeling good
- learning and developing new skills
- exercise is healthy
- spending time and doing things with friends
- feelings of success
- increasing muscle strength
- improving physical fitness.

DID YOU KNOW THAT

- cycling to school can account for as much as half of daily brisk physical activity
- a bicycle is the fastest way to travel distances under 5 km in a city
- walking and cycling are concrete actions to combat climate change
- everyday physical activity saves money.

Find your favourite ways to move

Helsinki is full of opportunities for physical activity, both in everyday life and free time. We have compiled the opportunities available in the city at www.helsinkiliikkuu.fi/en > Find your favourite ways to move.



Find your way to exercise at helsinkiliikkuu.fi/en. Share your exercise routine on social media with the hashtag #HelsinkiLiikkuu and subscribe to Helsinki's Physical Activity Programme (Helsinki liikkuu) social media channels.

Obstacles to physical activity and the most common myths

“ I don’t know how to approach the subject of exercise with my child.

The foundation for an active lifestyle is strengthened throughout childhood. Guardians can influence their children’s physical activity by asking what the children are interested in, encouraging and praising them and engaging in physical activity together with them. With your family, choose one or two small, concrete physical activities and write down a goal. Place the goal in a visible spot in your home. After a week, you can decide whether the activities you tried can become routine or come up with new activities. You’re sure to find the right types of physical activity for you. It doesn’t matter if you’re sometimes too tired or an hour a day seems impossible at first. It’s a good idea to start easy.

“ It’s not safe for my children to travel to their hobbies or school independently.

Safety is an important element of physical activity. You should practise safe travel with your children. Traffic safety has continuously taken steps forwards. In 2019, no pedestrians lost their lives in road traffic in Helsinki. The number of personal injuries to cyclists has also decreased by almost one fifth in the last ten years due to lower driving speeds in densely populated areas, construction of new bike routes and improvements to existing routes, as well as improved traffic arrangements in junctions. Driving your child to places does them no favours – quite the opposite in fact. Many risks occur in school yards as guardians drop their children off at school by car.

“ I don’t have a friend to be physically active with.

Organized sports provide an excellent opportunity to make new friends. Many others may also be considering whether they dare to participate in activities such as EasySport and FunAction activities if they don’t know any of the other participants. It is likely that you make new friends through hobbies, and, for many, friends become the most important reason to commit to a sports hobby. 93% of those who exercise the recommended amount do not feel lonely.

“ I am not physically active and I do not have the time for physical activity.

Not everyone has to have a sports hobby. However, daily physical activity is necessary for our bodies, which is why you should consider a solution in the form of everyday routines. Physical activity is typically associated with exercise and sports performance or succeeding in competitions or school sports. You may, however, actually be quite active without realising it, as you walk your dog or bike to school. Small changes in your daily habits have a large effect – for example, riding a bike is the fastest way to travel distances of less than 5 km in urban environments. Taking the stairs is as physically demanding as jogging. Become aware of the exercise opportunities in your everyday life and be physically active whenever you can. The most important thing is regularity: raise your heartbeat and get out of breath every day.

“ My child participates organized sports twice a week. He/she is definitely active enough.

Organized sports is important and enables children to learn new skills and have enjoyable activities in a safe environment with their friends. Organized sports alone is not enough, in fact, two physical training sessions per week only account for roughly 10–15% of the minimum recommend level of weekly physical activity. That is why it is important to be physically active in everyday life.



Isabella, has a physical hobby and gets rides to and from the hobby venue

Activity level: one hour per day

- Wakes up and has breakfast
- Travels to and from school by public transport (2 x 5 min)
- Spends breaks hanging out on school benches indoors
- Gets a ride to her physical hobby and back home
- 1.5-hour exercise session (of which 50 min physically active)
- Spends the evening on social media

Conclusion: Isabella needs more activity on days that she does not have an organized sports session.

“ My child would like to have a sports hobby, but it’s too expensive.

There are numerous opportunities for physical activity available in Helsinki, either free of charge or at a low cost. Visit www.helsinki.fi/en to find EasySport and FunAction activities, afternoon activities, local sports facilities and cycling routes, as well as a great amount of information, tips and opportunities to incorporate physical activity into your everyday life.



Ben, physically active when commuting to and from school and in everyday life

Activity level: 2 h 10 min per day

- Wakes up, has breakfast and goes on a quick walk with the dog (10 min)
- Commutes to and from school by bicycle (2 x 15 min)
- Plays football briskly with classmates during breaks (2 x 15 min)
- Cycles to piano lessons and back home (2 x 15 min)
- Walks the dog with his sister in the evening (30 min)

Conclusion: Everyday physical activity and play amount to more than two hours of physical activity per day.