

YMCA Child Care Helps Build Healthy Kids

Connectedness with others, physical activity and good nutrition are essential for the healthy growth and development of children. The YMCA emphasizes these important components in its child care programs. As parents, you should know how to recognize the characteristics of child care and after-school programs devoted to keeping kids healthy and fit on all levels. Use this list as a guide when evaluating programs for your children.

CONNECTEDNESS

- Staff members spend time interacting one-on-one with children throughout the day, with very little communication done with the large group as a whole.
- Children are listened to and involved in program and activity planning.
- Staff and parents communicate on a regular basis about the experiences, needs and development of the kids in the program.
- Parents and family members are welcome at all times and have opportunities to participate in planning program improvements and social events.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- TV and videos are used sparingly or not at all. They are not a part of everyday activities.
- Children spend minimal time in front of computer screens.
- There are regular opportunities for fun, active, physical play—both in and out of doors. Children have a chance to dance, run, jump, climb, play non-competitive active games and sports, and maneuver around playground and gym equipment.
- In preschool programs, children have an opportunity to play outdoors daily. In afterschool programs, children play outdoors several times a week.
- The program has a variety of toys and equipment available for active play (balls, kites, jump ropes, bikes, skates, etc.).
- Staff plan activities that encourage children to be active (group games, sports, relays, challenge courses and Olympic-type events).

NUTRITION

- The program serves healthy meals and snacks:
 - Fresh fruits, vegetables and whole juices daily
 - Low sugar carbohydrates
 - Low fat or skim milk, yogurt and cheeses
 - Whole grain breads, crackers and cereals
 - Lean meats, eggs, nuts, peanut butter and beans
- Snacks high in sugar and fat are served sparingly or not at all.
- Children have opportunities to learn about and help prepare healthy snacks and meals in a clean, safe environment.

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- Drinking water is encouraged at all times.
- Snacks times are flexible, allowing children to eat when they are hungry and not only at prescribed times.
- The staff model healthy habits—eating healthy foods with the children and participating in physical activities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The National Association for the Education of Young Children has materials for families about child care, visit their Web site at <http://naeyc.org/families/>.

Zero to Three has materials about selecting the right provider for your child's personality and needs, <http://naeyc.org/families/>.