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EUROPEAN WEEK OF SPORT



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**More activity. Less sitting.
Better diet. Better sleep.**

Toolkit for European School Sport Day event coordinators

Use this toolkit to promote **#HealthyLifestyle4All**
choices and messages among school children

EUROPEAN SCHOOL SPORT DAY®: GETTING SCHOOLS ON THE MOVE!

What if every child could #BeActive in school with sport and play?
What if every school took one day to celebrate sport in Europe?
Could it help students kick off a lifetime of health and fitness?

We say YES. And we're doing it with European School Sport Day, which is supported by the European Union as a flagship event of the European Week of Sport.



What can you find in this toolkit

The International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and Hungarian School Sport Federation have teamed up to present you this toolkit on promoting healthy lifestyles through European School Sport Day and every day in school settings.

Find out what schools can do to help children develop a healthy routine that includes More activity. Less sitting. Better diet. Better sleep. Discover practical activity ideas, tips and tricks for kids, ready-made social media messages, and how NGOs who support schools can commit to the EU's #HealthyLifestyle4All pledge.





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1 A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR ALL

DID YOU KNOW?

Lack of exercise now causes as many deaths as smoking across the world, and the problem of physical inactivity is so significant that it was defined as a pandemic by leading researchers in 2012.

Source: Kohl HW et al. The Lancet. 2012, Jul 21.

European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, launched the [HealthyLifestyle4All initiative](#) in September 2021 as a call for organisations and institutions to commit to specific actions that encourage people to be more active and make healthier lifestyle choices.

Schools are vital settings to promote healthy lifestyles

Successful actions are expected to raise awareness about healthy lifestyles among different age groups, enable earlier access to sport and physical activity, and take a holistic approach to educating about food, health, wellbeing and physical activity.

As the emphasis is on acting early to inspire lifelong healthy habits – what better place to start than at school? In fact, the Commission itself has dedicated its own pledge to [“Promoting healthy lifestyles in schools”](#):

“The European Commission will promote healthy lifestyles in schools by highlighting the importance of physical activity and sport for healthy development and for boosting the learning process. Additionally, the Commission will address mental health and socio-emotional wellbeing at school. The objective is to achieve better educational outcomes for young Europeans.”

It is vital for schools and caregivers to help fulfil this pledge – and this toolkit zooms in on four easy ways to start the conversation: More activity. Less sitting. Better diet. Better sleep.

Since 2015, European School Sport Day has raised awareness among over 2 million children each year about being active, healthy nutrition, mental wellbeing and taking care of the environment. This toolkit collects some of these key messages, fun activity ideas and more – enjoy the read!

INTRODUCTION FROM THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

Over the past decades, countries in the WHO European Region have made tremendous progress in improving child and adolescent health and well-being. Despite this, challenges persist, and recent crises have not made the situation any easier to address. Overweight and obesity is a growing public health challenge affecting on average 1 in 3 children in the Region. The prevalence of mental disorders is around 16 per cent, meaning that 9 million children and adolescents aged 10–19 live with a mental disorder in Europe. Data show a decline in the strength, endurance and flexibility of children in European countries. For millions of children and adolescents, the extent to which countries invest in their health and well-being will determine their future. We, at the WHO NCD Office are constantly working to help Member States in this battle, through support for implementation of activities in countries, cities and communities. There are many new initiatives under way that can help to increase physical activity, ranging from cities building safe cycling lanes, to utilising a whole-of-school approach to provide opportunities to be physically active before, during and after the school day. School-based health promotion has long been a key approach to improve health and well-being as evidence shows that intervening during childhood can have lifelong, intergenerational benefits. Although awed by the scale of our task, we believe that collectively we can give our children the best chance for a healthy and active life.

Kremlin Wickramasinghe

Head a.i., WHO European Office for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD Office) and Adviser (Nutrition), Division of Country Health Programs

INTRODUCTIONS FROM HUNGARIAN SCHOOL SPORT FEDERATION & INTERNATIONAL SPORT AND CULTURE ASSOCIATION

The evidence is clear. Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for death globally. Schools play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of students, and school-based programs are now more important than ever in supporting recovery by facilitating healthy lifestyles among students. The Hungarian School Sport Federation (HSSF), as one of the largest civil organisations in Hungary, launched European School Sport Day over a decade ago with the aim of creating fun and enjoyable physical activity initiatives in schools. Although the main focus of the event has remained, we acknowledge the importance of a more comprehensive approach that brings together health-enhancing physical activity, healthy eating and quality of sleep. We invite you to use this toolkit to start working towards a supportive school culture and environment.



Gábor Balogh

President, Hungarian School Sport Federation



Mogens Kirkeby

President, International Sport and Culture Association

We are giving our children a huge task to restore the planet's 'wellbeing'. With such a burden we should at least give our children and young people a fair chance to enjoy personal wellbeing! COVID-19 has hit our children and young people hard. Extremely hard. According to the OECD, anxiety and depression increased by 200% among youth and their physical activity has declined by almost 50% during the pandemic, with vulnerable and low-income communities the worst hit, as reported by the Lancet. In other words, young people's mental and physical health have worsened over the past two years – which is not fair. All sectors, from education and public health to political decision makers and civil society, know the strong documented evidence that a physically active lifestyle is crucial to children and young people's health. And we have no excuses. The solutions are cheap and effective. This toolkit highlights why schools should take the lead in healthy lifestyle promotion and how they can do so in fun, interactive ways. We are grateful for the EU operating grant in the field of health, allowing us to produce this toolkit and engage more in health advocacy, and to the Hungarian School Sport Federation and WHO Europe for your contributions to the content. This cooperation marks another step towards a #HealthyLifestyle4All.

Ten times fewer children with overweight and obesity



THE 'GOOD OLD DAYS'



Kids were more active



TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN



3

CHILDHOOD IS A CRITICAL AND PROMISING AGE

Teachers play a key role

- Children spend on average 180 days per year in school = half of their childhood
- Calculating with 3 meals per day (1 lunch & 2 snacks) they consume approx. 540 meals per year in the school = this covers 65% of their total energy needs
- Habits formed in childhood will most likely last life-long

What is happening in school has critical implications for a child's everyday life and their future. As a teacher or school staff member, you can have an impact. What can you do? In line with recent policies – the secret is that living a healthy lifestyle is dependent on many elements coming together. To have an impact, we need to try a holistic approach.

Take small steps towards better health

Exercise	Exercise regularly
Sitting time	Reduce sitting time
Water	Drink plenty of water
Diet	Eat healthy
Weight	Have a healthy body weight
Stress	Reduce stress
Sleep	Get enough sleep

TIP!

Be a role model for your students: Children will look at you and learn from your daily habits and skills.
Empower your students: We need to move away from the old approach of teachers needing to 'fix' everything. Instead, teach your students how they can take their own healthy decisions.



4

**MORE ACTIVITY. LESS SITTING.
BETTER DIET. BETTER SLEEP.**

More activity.

Exercise helps not only to nourish children's bodies, but also their brains. As well as developing musculoskeletal strength and cardio stamina, regular physical activity can boost brain growth and improve cognition, memory and concentration. So more activity is a win-win that should lead to better health and better performance in class.

Less sitting.

Children accumulate more hours of sitting each day than ever. They sit in class during school hours and in front of screens in their free time due to the evolution, attractiveness and necessity of digital technologies. But what if we could make learning time more active? And how can we help children kick their screen habits?

Better diet.

Children need regular meals and snacks to give them the energy and nutrients to grow and stay healthy. But it's not just about what children eat, but also the environment around them when they are eating. It should be calm and enjoyable without distractions from television or computer games.

Better sleep.

Sleep is essential for growth, immunity, learning and memory, and it is important in helping a child heal and recover. Healthy sleep means a good quantity and quality of sleep, with regular sleep routines. A lack of healthy sleep has been linked to mental health problems, poor growth, excessive weight gain, and reduced school performance.

5

MORE ACTIVITY



5.1. FACTS & FIGURES

What is the recommended amount of physical activity for school-age children?

The World Health Organisation suggests that children and adolescents aged 5-17 years should do “at least an average of **60 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity**, mostly aerobic, physical activity, across the week”.

Moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA) is traditionally achieved in regular PE classes or participation in organised school sport, sports clubs or other active recreational pastimes outside school hours. Children can also accumulate their daily dose of physical activity through play and active transport.

What is the reality?

Well, the reality could be one of the first barriers preventing children from living a healthy lifestyle: **Only 20%** of children around the world actually meet these physical activity recommendations, and the situation has become worse since 2020.

Two months after the WHO declared Covid-19 as a global pandemic, 81% of European students aged 6-18 years did not meet the guidelines. WHO reported in the first half of 2022 that the global estimate of insufficient physical activity is still high, at 80%.

Sources: WHO, 2020 & 2022; Kovacs, V. A., Starc, G., Brandes, M., et al. (2021). 'Physical activity, screen time and the COVID-19 school closures in Europe – an observational study in 10 countries'.



The challenge – moving more, moving again

The clear message for children and adults recovering from the pandemic has been to reintroduce exercise step-by-step. The WHO’s advice for people who are not meeting the recommendations (and may find it overwhelming to start or restart): **“Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.”**

Therefore, the challenge of moving more or getting moving again might need a gentle touch in the school setting to motivate children and keep them interested in being active. On the next pages we offer some tips for doing this in practice.

KEY MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN

- Be as active as possible
- Be a P.E. champion
- Use your free time wisely in recess
- Use a bike or scooter to get to and from school or you can take a walk



5.2. WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Physical education (PE) is the only formal time set out in the school curriculum for physical activity. Competitive and non-competitive school sport are also regularly delivered by teachers or other school staff but tend to be optional and designed for children with a specific interest in one or more sports.

However, the Healthy and Physically Active Schools in Europe (HEPAS) project revealed that even these prescribed and “protected” timeslots for physical activity do not guarantee that children will meet their 60 minutes of active time: “Students are more active during PE lessons than in any other context, but generally fail to reach a target of 50% of lessons at MVPA.”

QUOTE

“Delivering physical activities at school is about much more than PE. It’s about changing the culture so that every teacher in the school can be part of it. For example, give generalist or subject-specific teachers the confidence to give young people regular, active brain breaks.”

Viv Holt, Youth Sport Trust International (ESSD Founding Partner)



How can schools make these times more active?

Physical Education and School Sport

- ✔ Train teachers and other staff delivering activities to maximise the amount of physical activity in the session and include all students. Equip children with the necessary motor skills to enable them to participate in physical activity over the long term.
- ✔ All students should have regular opportunities to play competitive and/or non-competitive sport activities, irrespective of their gender and ability.
- ✔ School sport should combine skill development, socialising and fun to help retain the children’s interest and enjoyment of the activity.

Active Recess

- ✔ Make developmentally appropriate play and sports equipment (balls, bats, hoops, ropes, etc.) available and supervised to ensure equitable and safe use.
- ✔ Find subtle ways to include children who might be left out, so they feel safe joining in but are not singled out as getting “special attention”.
- ✔ Use the [GoNoodle videos](#) as inspiration for some fun approaches.

Source: Adapted from the *Healthy and Physically Active Schools in Europe (HEPAS) project resources*.

MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN

- You don’t need to be the best in your PE class, but you can still be a PE champion by giving everything a try until you #FindYourMOVE.
- Use your recess time to take an active break – challenge your friends to fun games that get them moving.

5.3. ACTIVITY IDEAS

PE and school sport are still an essential way for schools to teach children about active and healthy lifestyles. But school teachers and staff need to be more creative and attentive than ever to encourage children of all abilities, levels of fitness and cultural or social backgrounds to join in.

European School Sport Day, on the last Friday of September each year, is an opportunity to showcase a range of sports and physical activities for children to try or compete in, depending on their skill level, confidence, ambition or interest. Here are some fun activity ideas from previous editions of European School Sport Day for you to try in your school.

- 1 **Active tic-tac-toe:** A sprint relay to connect 3 or 4
- 2 **Belly skateboard or any obstacle course on wheels:** Roll your way around the course, for all ages
- 3 **Exercise ball jump rope:** Try to bounce and skip at the same time, for individuals or groups. The photo says it all.
- 4 **Bike-powered car race:** Be the fastest on four wheels and two wheels at the same time!



6

LESS SITTING



DID YOU KNOW?

Physical activity appears to help organise children's developing brains. Physical activity is associated with more efficiently organised, robust, and flexible brain networks. So the more physical activity, the "fitter" the brain.

Source: [Brooks et al, 2021](#)

6.1. FACTS & FIGURES

What is sedentary behaviour?

Sedentary behaviour involves a prolonged time of inactivity whilst being awake – at school this usually means sitting (lying down is likely to be reserved for naps for the youngest ones, or punishable moments of laziness for the older ones 😊). But restless moving around gets in the way of focusing and learning, right? Well, not quite. Moving regularly can help beat fatigue and stimulate children's attention spans and, ultimately, their performance.

What is the maximum sedentary time recommendation for kids?

The WHO does not set maximum limits for sedentary time for children or adults but suggests limiting the amount of time spent being sedentary. The 24-hour movement guidelines for children recommend no more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time and limited sitting for extended periods. There is reasonable evidence that too much recreational screen time can delay physical and mental development, and can lead to attention disorders, poor sleep, fewer social skills and obesity in children. Additionally, recent research uncovered the link between screen time and anxiety and depression in children and youth.

How much are children sitting?

A [large multi-country survey](#) run in 10 countries during the COVID-19 pandemic reported that children spent on average 2.4 hours on weekdays and 2.9 hours on weekends in front of different screens during their free time, and less than half of the kids met the 24-hour movement guidelines for screen time. Older children and boys spent more time sitting.

6.2. WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Reduce sedentary time during the school day

School teachers can think outside the box to find the right moments for physical activity throughout the day that energise rather than disrupt their class. Exercise doesn't need to be limited to PE or school sport – and learning time doesn't always need to mean sitting down.

Try to add the following active elements to an average school day:

Brain Breaks

- ✓ Regular 1-5-minute pauses for children to get up, stretch and move.
- ✓ Inclusive, easy and non-intimidating games that engage all students – students can alternate in leading the active break with their favourite MOVE.

Active Learning

- ✓ Make your lessons more active! Counting can be combined with jumping in maths; science can include a “study tour” outside in the nature; and teaching about health should of course include exercise!

Active Homework

- ✓ Assign homework tasks that combine learning with physical activity – be creative and make sure parents and carers know how to help.

Active Transport

- ✓ Ensure safe routes to school and take action in the community if walking or cycling paths are unsafe.
- ✓ Facilitate bike education, walking or even scooter groups to help children feel more confident commuting actively.

Source: Adapted from the Healthy and Physically Active Schools in Europe (HEPAS) project [resources](#).

MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN

- Balance sitting and learning time with active time – both at home and at school. Ask your teacher to get your class to stand up once every 30 minutes and combine it with an active break.
- “Break up” with your phone – 2 hours total in a day is more than enough. Replace screen time with different active games in your free time.
- Instead of sitting in a car, use a bike or scooter to travel to and from school or you can take a walk.

6.3. ACTIVITY IDEAS

Too much sitting in a row on each day may increase the risk of several diseases on the longer term, such as type 2 diabetes or heart disease. For school children, sitting at a desk seems to be an unavoidable part of the day. But it shouldn't be like that. With a little creativity and engagement, school teachers can break up long periods of sitting and can reduce sitting time for their students.

Stand up for a brain break

- **Ultra-short at desk:** Get up and move for 1 to 5 minutes in every half hour to break up sitting time, help your students focus and reduce their stress level. Turn it into a quick game: Use fun commands and gestures to make them stand up and sit down. Swap the gestures and words to make an elimination contest out of who can stand and sit at the right times.
- **The atom game:** Like musical chairs. Without the music. Or the chairs.
- **Physical Activity Cube:** At ISCA, we love this game. At our Copenhagen office, we use one in Danish by Firmaidræt for physical and language challenges (you can also use dice instead of making a cube). Roll the cube and do the activity on the side that comes up. Repeat.
- **20 breaks that take 3 minutes or less:** Including printable materials.
- **Mindful brain breaks:** 37 more brain break ideas – including breathing exercises and yoga!
- **ISCA active breaks for all ages:** A video playlist

7 BETTER DIET



DID YOU KNOW?

There are already 124 million children suffering from obesity globally: a more than tenfold increase in four decades!

Source: European School Sport Day Healthy Nutrition Toolkit, 2019.

7.1. FACTS & FIGURES

What are the key elements of a healthy diet for kids?

A diet rich in fruit and vegetables provides fibre, vitamins and minerals, which are all important for supporting growth and development. They also supply antioxidants for optimal immune function in children. High daily intakes of fruit and vegetables are associated with lower rates of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and possibly some types of cancers. Research also suggests that fruit and vegetable consumption can prevent weight gain and sustain weight loss.

Water is the best choice for children to restore fluids their bodies have lost, for example, through sweating. The general recommendation for children is to drink at least 2 litres of safe water a day. If children become 'dehydrated', their bodies cannot function properly. Sugary drinks provide calories children do not need and increase the risk of obesity and dental cavities. Choosing water over sugary drinks significantly reduces children's sugar as well as their calories intake.

What are kids really eating and what are poor diets doing to them?

Every day children are exposed to cheap and readily available ultra-processed, energy-dense, and nutrient-poor foods. Combined with lack of exercise, poor nutrition can lead either to underweight or overweight. Overweight/obesity effects on average 1 out of 3 European children. Being overweight or obese during childhood and adolescence is associated with adverse health consequences throughout life.

7.2. WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Schools can encourage good nutritional habits by:

Providing easy access to the healthy options

- ✓ Healthy food should always be on the canteen menu.
- ✓ Food and drinks that are less healthy, but contain some valuable nutrients, should be served only once or twice per week and the serving size should be kept small.

Eliminating unhealthy foods

- ✓ Food and drinks that contain excess energy and/or saturated fat and/or salt and/or sugar and low in nutritional value are not recommended to go on the canteen menu.

Restricting marketing and advertising to children

- ✓ Schools should be protected environments and free from marketing of less healthy food and drinks.
- ✓ Do not allow any sponsorship by companies that produce unhealthy food and drinks.

Improving education about healthier food choices

- ✓ Educate children about healthy nutrition and healthy lifestyle.
- ✓ Introduce nutritional training to all school staff.

Creating partnerships with the broader community

- ✓ Search for local food growers and organise visits to help children appreciate the value of food and how it is produced.

Source: Adapted from the Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity (JANPA) project [resources](#).

MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN

- Drink a lot of water - Light or diet drinks are better, but water is the best choice when you are thirsty.
- 1 glass of sugary drink has as many calories as a chocolate bar.
- Don't grab energy drinks to boost your energy - they can do more harm than good. Move your body instead.
- Eat your five a day - Eat fruit and/or veggies with every meal.

7.3. ACTIVITY IDEAS

You can organise a ‘Better diet’ or green activity at your school at any time of the year – fruit and vegetables are seasonal, so you could time activities to highlight what’s available each season. Here are some activity ideas from the [European School Sport Day Healthy Nutrition Toolkit](#), which can be used to create simple and easy challenges for a day, a week or a month. Award participants with fun badges or prizes at the end so it will help you engage all children!

- Encourage children to try a new vegetable or fruit they have never tasted before every week! Ask them to draw or write about their tasting experience.
- Challenge children to eat a fruit and veggie of the month/season every day!
- Kids can prepare a monthly schedule using a pre-filled calendar to follow.
- Ask children to learn to prepare a healthy snack each week and show it to their classmates!
- Arrange cooking classes so the children can try healthy recipes together.
- Ask children to create a list of all their favourite healthy snacks.
- Try a “No Soda!” challenge for a month.
- Visit farmer’s market or a farm.

Source: European School Sport Day Healthy Nutrition Toolkit, 2019.

Leave a legacy: create a school garden

School gardens are an ideal place to be physically active, take on responsibility, and learn to grow fruit and vegetables. It is easy to start a school garden with few resources—a big green area is not always needed. Small spaces can be enough to grow onions, salads, herbs or even tomatoes. Remember to ask your school gardener first if you have one 😊

8

BETTER SLEEP



DID YOU KNOW?

That it is not only food and nutrition that can affect your ability to perform well in physical activities, but that some sleeping patterns are more beneficial for athletic performance than others? Studies have found that the performance of early risers (larks) peaks at midday, while late risers (owls) peak at around 8pm. Those who get up somewhere in between enjoy peak performance at around 4pm.

8.1. FACTS & FIGURES

Why a good night's rest matters for kids?

While children sleep, their bodies are repairing themselves and creating energy for the next day. Research proved that kids who regularly get adequate amount of sleep have better mental and physical health, as well as an improved attention, behaviour, learning and creativity. Not getting enough sleep can affect mood, memory and health; and can lead to poor academic performance, irritability, as well as to an increased risk of infections, high blood pressure, obesity, depression and even accidents.

How much should kids be sleeping?

As children get older, their total sleep time decreases. So, the recommended amount of sleep varies by age. It is 9-12 hours for school children aged 6-12 years, and 8-10 hours for teenagers aged 13-18 years.

How much do they actually sleep?

Epidemiologic studies indicate that up to 50% of children experience a sleep problem, and about 4% have a formal sleep disorder diagnosis. Despite the common occurrence and considerable impact of sleep problems in the lives of children and adolescents, sleep problems are not of major concern among kids, parents and doctors.

8.2. WHAT KIDS CAN DO (AND HOW SCHOOLS CAN HELP)

“For most kids, sleeping comes pretty naturally. Here are some tips to help you sleep better and catch all the ZZZs you need.” (kidshealth.org)

- ✔ Establishing a consistent bedtime routine is important. Your routine should ideally start at the same time every night. Yes, also on weekends... Having a routine helps prepare your mind and body to sleep.
- ✔ Try to go to bed at the same time all week.
- ✔ Turn off all screens at least 1 hour before it is time to sleep. Screens in a dark room can make it harder to sleep. Having lights, phones or televisions on can trick the brain into thinking it's still daytime and time to be awake. The best way is not to have a television or video games in your bedroom. Try winding down with quiet activities instead, such as reading or having a warm bath.
- ✔ Make sure that your bedroom is cool and dark. The best temperature for the most comfortable sleep is around 18-19 degrees Celsius. Darkness is essential to sleep well, too. The absence of light sends a critical signal to the body that it is time to rest. Light exposure at the wrong times alters the body's internal “clock” (i.e. the biological mechanism that regulates sleep-wake cycles) in ways that interfere with both the quantity and quality of sleep.
- ✔ “Air out” your room with fresh air before going to bed.
- ✔ Limit caffeine in the late afternoon and evening. And it's not only an adult thing affecting coffee drinkers. Tea, energy drinks and some sodas – especially cola – also contain caffeine. A caffeine/sugar buzz from soda is one of the worst things to battle before bedtime.

- ✔ Exercise regularly. Active kids tend to fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer than inactive kids. But avoid waking your body with exercise just before going to bed.
- ✔ If you have regular problems with falling asleep or are continuously anxious about things that are keeping you from a good night's rest, it's important to ask for help from your parents.

Source: Adapted from kidshealth.org

What schools can do

You, as a teacher, can help children understand the value of sleep and teach them healthy sleeping habits. Not all children understand the importance of sleep and how it can help them achieve academic success. So get your class together and have regular informative conversations with them.

If you recognise that a student is experiencing regular daytime sleepiness or behavioural difficulties (irritability or lethargy, for example) in school that you think might be linked to lack of sleep, you should definitely notify their parents or caregivers and advise them to visit a paediatrician.

MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN

- Set up a consistent sleeping schedule
- Make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet and cool
- Don't watch TV or use electronic devices in bed
- Create regular bedtime rituals

9

MENTAL WELLBEING MATTERS TOO!

You are not alone: Always refer to specialised practitioners for help if acute mental health challenges arise among students.

Childhood and adolescence are critically important life stages for mental health and wellbeing. During this period, children further develop skills and capabilities such as self-control, autonomy, social interaction and learning that directly influence their mental health for the rest of their lives. Dealing with mental health is challenging, yet it is a neglected area.

A healthy lifestyle is connected to mental wellbeing and learning

- Routine physical activity can be associated with improved cognitive performance, classroom behaviour and academic achievement among young people.
- Physical activity can help combat depression and lead to improvement in self-esteem.
- Long periods of sedentary behaviour are associated with deteriorating mental health.

What schools can do

A positive and nurturing school environment can help children flourish, learn and succeed by providing opportunities for them to develop the strengths and coping skills that underpin resilience. This involves all parts of the school in working together: teachers, school staff, parents, students and the wider community. Trained school staff could work through the following activities with the students:

- ✓ How to regulate emotions
- ✓ How physical activity effects stress levels and wellbeing
- ✓ Boosting positive feelings by releasing endorphins (“happy hormones”) through physical activity
- ✓ How to solve problems
- ✓ How to be aware of situations that trigger bad feelings or certain behaviour
- ✓ How to plan ahead and prioritise tasks
- ✓ Doing enjoyable things as a positive distraction

10 WHAT NEXT?

HOW TO TAKE SMALL STEPS TOWARDS BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Message for children

- You don't need to change everything from one day to another – if your lifestyle is far from healthy, don't try to become better in all areas suddenly. Pick one area first and set up realistic targets for what you can maintain in the longer term.
- Talk about your plans – your parents, friends and teachers can be good allies along the way.

Message for ESSD coordinators, teachers and school staff

- Encouraging healthy lifestyles should not be a campaign, but rather practical and fun steps that guide the way towards life-long changes.

WORK TOGETHER AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

A whole-school-community approach to health and wellbeing makes healthy lifestyle conversations and interventions a part of everyday life. This should involve not only the school staff, but also students, parents and other community partners as physical activity, health and healthy environment ambassadors.

11

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AMBASSADORS AND ADVOCACY



Who can submit a HealthyLifestyle4All pledge?

The European Commission's HealthyLifestyle4All campaign will run until September 2023, and different actors are invited to submit pledges in support of the campaign. Individuals and schools are not permitted to submit pledges, but civil society organisations may do so, and some may represent your school or region. Healthy lifestyle promotion in school settings – as we have seen from the European Commission's own pledge – is, of course, an eligible focus topic.

Eligible actors and countries/regions

“To promote a broad outreach, uptake and ownership of healthy lifestyles across society, the European Commission wishes to involve sport movements at national, European and international level; state authorities (ministries), cities & regions (local governments) and civil society organisations of the EU Member States, the Erasmus+ programme countries, the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans countries.”

Three main focus area pillars

- Increased awareness of a healthy lifestyle across all generations
- Easier access to sport, physical activity and healthy diets, with special focus on inclusion and non-discrimination to reach disadvantaged groups
- Teaming up for a holistic approach to food, health, wellbeing and sport

(Source: [HealthyLifestyle4All](#), 2021)

EXAMPLE PLEDGE FROM A CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION

Committed to Sport and Health

European School Sport Day partner Deporte para la Educación y la Salud (Sports for Education and Health) in Spain pledges to promote HealthyLifestyle4All at schools to

- transform schools into places where healthy lifestyles are present every day, in all activities
- help students, parents and school staff get into healthy and active lifestyles
- a more active and healthy future society from habits learned through experience at school

DES plans activities from 2021-2023 including

- training school teachers to educate kids in active and healthy habits
- coordinate active and healthy events for schools
- carry out research on kids to determine activity levels and nutrition behaviour
- advocate to schools and administrations promoting joining the pledge

Expected measurable outcomes

- 400 teachers newly trained on active and healthy habits
- 600 schools participating at events
- 2 new research papers published
- 40 schools and 10 public administrations signing the pledge

How to submit a HealthyLifestyle4All pledge

HealthyLifestyle4All pledges are typically short and to the point. They should also aim to fulfil an achievable action or goal that will contribute towards the overall vision of more healthy lifestyle promotion across different parts of society. Partnership and coalition-building is also key – as was the focus of [ISCA's HealthyLifestyle4All Coalition-Building Event pledge](#).

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT A PLEDGE](#)

SUPPORT THE #HEALTHYLIFESTYLE4ALL CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Did you know? Children spend on average 180 days per year in school – this is half of their childhood! 🏠👧👦👉
We have a big responsibility to make sure children enjoy good physical and mental wellbeing at school. More activity, less sitting, better diet and better sleep can help achieve a #HealthyLifestyle4All ❤️ [Link to this toolkit]
- Habits formed in childhood are likely to be lifelong habits. We are striving to be a healthy school by promoting four essential elements of a #HealthyLifestyle4All – More activity, less sitting, better diet and better sleep.
👉 Find out how you can be a healthy lifestyle ambassador 😊 [Link to this toolkit]
- Did you know that children consume approx. 540 meals per year at school? Is your school offering food and drinks that enable a #HealthyLifestyle4All? 🥗🍎🥗
👉 Find out how to encourage children eat healthier by turning healthy diet choices into a game! Check out this new toolkit [Link to this toolkit]
- More activity, less sitting, better diet and better sleep are key elements of a #HealthyLifestyle4All 🌍🏃👧👦👉 Discover fun ways for teachers and school staff to teach healthy lifestyle choices to students of all ages [Link to this toolkit]

Download supporting visuals from the [European School Sport Day website](#)

SELECTION OF RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION

Toolkits & Infographics

European School Sport Day toolkits for teachers and schools

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1y8H8A4S9xSIFfxcrTgSMci4SboUxmdiJ>

Healthy and Physically Active Schools in Europe (HEPAS) infographics

<https://www.movingschoolsaward.com/hepas-infographics>

Brain Breaks

<https://www.classcraft.com/blog/brain-break-ideas/>

<https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/brain-break-activities-for-middle-school/>

<https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/brain-breaks-for-kids/>

<https://minds-in-bloom.com/20-three-minute-brain-breaks/>

Facts & Figures

WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240015128>

Promoting physical activity through schools: policy brief

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049567>

Kovacs, V. A., Starc, G., Brandes, M., et al. (2021). 'Physical activity, screen time and the COVID-19 school closures in Europe - an observational study in 10 countries'.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17461391.2021.1897166>

Campaigns & Advocacy

European Commission's HealthyLifestyle4All Initiative

<https://sport.ec.europa.eu/initiatives/healthylifestyle4all>

The Lancet: The pandemic of physical inactivity: global action for public health

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22818941/>

International Sport and Culture Association and CEBR: Inactivity Time Bomb

<https://inactivity-time-bomb.nowwemove.com/>

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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