

# Middle Childhood: Physical Growth and Development

## Overview

During the middle years of childhood from 6 to 10 years gradual changes take place in physical growth, and in both gross and fine motor coordination.

Unfortunately, middle years children are subject to disruptions in physical growth and development. Accidents and injuries increase, disorders such as obesity or anorexia and bulimia, learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder are all observed during this period.

Poverty may depress physical growth and development through poor nutrition, inadequate medical care, homelessness and exposure to violence.

Schools have an important role to play in helping children reach their full physical potential. Providing nutrition and health education, physical education, and safe play areas, and nutritious meals are ways school can support normal physical growth and development.

Before and after school care is an important consideration for employed parents of school-age children. Parents must choose among several options. These decisions are based on the physical safety of the children, the type of activities, and the costs and convenience of the options chosen.

## Questions To Consider

1. What are the physical changes which occur during middle childhood?
2. What is the best predictor of gross and fine motor skills?
3. In what ways may physical growth be disrupted?
4. How does poverty influence physical growth and development?
5. What role do schools have in the physical growth of school-age children?
6. What is good after school care?

## Vocabulary

Read these terms with their definitions before viewing the program.

**Anorexia** A eating disorder in which an individual restricts intake of food to the point of starvation.

**Attention deficit disorder (ADD)** Difficulty in concentrating for more than short periods of time.

**Attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)** Condition which includes characteristics of ADD plus impulsiveness and excitability.

**Bulimia** An eating disorder in which the individual binges on food and then purges.

**Dyscalculia** Problems in learning mathematics

**Dysgraphia** Inability to learn to write.

**Dyslexia** Inability to read; not a specific diagnosis.

**Fine motor skills** Skills using small muscles such as in writing, drawing, cutting, sewing, etc.

**Gross motor skills** Skills using large muscles such as running, jumping, etc.

**Myelination** The process in which a fatty insulating substance (myelin) coats the nerve cells and facilitates the transmission of electrical impulses in the brain

**Obesity** Body weight that is 20% more than average.

**Traumatic shock syndrome** A variety of physical symptoms after an individual experiences or witnesses violence.

## Instructional Objectives

When you have successfully completed this module, you will be able to:

1. Describe physical changes which take place during middle childhood.
2. Describe the development of motor skills during middle childhood.
3. Recognize the disruptions in physical growth and development during middle childhood.
4. Identify the influence of poverty on physical growth and development during this period.
5. Describe the role of the school in the physical growth and development of school-age children.
6. Describe options available for before and after school care.

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### Self-Test

After studying the objectives and watching the video, take the self-test to check your progress. In the following, select the phrase which best completes each statement.

1. Before puberty, middle years boys and girls
  - a. are somewhat unequal in height and weight
  - b. are about equal in height and weight
  - c. differ in height but not weight
  - d. differ in weight but not height
2. One of the earliest physical changes observed during middle childhood is the
  - a. loss of first set of teeth
  - b. growth spurt
  - c. lung capacity decreases
  - d. all of the above
3. Throughout middle childhood
  - a. legs and arms lengthen
  - b. torso slims
  - b. lung capacity increases
  - d. all the above
4. The rate of maturation and growth is influenced by
  - a. heredity more than environment
  - b. environment more than heredity
  - c. both heredity and environment
  - d. neither heredity nor environment
5. The best predictor of a child's gross and fine motor skills is
  - a. chronological age
  - b. gender
  - c. practice
  - d. opportunity
6. When comparing motor skills in boys and girls the following statement is most true
  - a. boys have greater forearm strength than girls
  - b. girls are more flexible than boys
  - c. practice improves skills for both boys and girls
  - d. all the above
7. Describe three major disruptions in physical growth and development during middle childhood
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Identify three effects of poverty on physical growth and development
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Write T next to the statement if true, F if false.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. schools should provide an environment that encourages physical activity and mental challenge
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. cooperative games reduce tension and stress
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. physical education classes should concentrate on current fitness skills
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. health and nutrition education should be part of the curriculum
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. softball is the best game for middle years children
  - \_\_\_\_\_ f. schools have no role in educating parents in health and nutrition
  - \_\_\_\_\_ g. schools should cooperate with local health clinics to provide medical care for the students
  - \_\_\_\_\_ h. school playgrounds require soft impact surfaces
  - \_\_\_\_\_ i. schools should provide nutritious lunch programs where necessary
10. Describe options available for before and after school care.  
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