

Play equipment that gets kids moving

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Parents will be pleased to know that more is not always better when it comes to play equipment for their children.

A study by researchers at The University of Queensland found [children](#) who have access to fixed play equipment like swings and slides and fewer electronic devices were more likely to meet national physical activity guidelines.

UQ School of Public Health researcher Dr. Katrina Moss said it was good news for parents, who can implement the findings at home.

"In this study, we found the type of play equipment that children have at home is directly related to the amount of physical activity they do," Dr. Moss said.

"This is good news because play equipment at home is modifiable, and in lots of cases, it can be easily changed.

"It's also not about having the most equipment; it's about having the right equipment.

"Parents don't have to go out and buy every toy, they just need to have the right combination of play

equipment to support their child's physical activity."

The study identified four combinations of play equipment, categorized as Plenties, Sliders, Batters and Techies.

Plenties averaged eight different types of active play equipment compared to Sliders with six, yet there was no difference in their physical activity.

"This shows kids can be just as active with less equipment," Dr. Moss said.

Batters averaged five different types of play equipment and Techies seven, but these groups were the least physically active.

The difference was that their play equipment was mostly portable items such as bats and skipping ropes, instead of fixed. The Techies also had double the [electronic devices](#) in the bedroom.

"The findings should be reassuring for parents—they don't have to buy everything, but they do need the right combination of equipment to support the development of gross motor skills and physical activity," she said.

Research shows that fewer than 20 percent of children aged five to 17 meet the physical activity guidelines of one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, putting them at risk of diseases like diabetes and obesity.

"If we can support children to be more active now, it protects their future health and reduces the risk of lifestyle diseases," she said.

Urban density was another contributing factor, with diminishing backyards and playgrounds eroding children's playtime.

"It is important to note that having this bigger, fixed equipment does require a bigger backyard.

"Increasingly, children's play is going inside as the

size of our backyards is decreasing.

"If [parents](#) can't provide fixed [equipment](#) in their own backyard due to limited spaces, then we need to be designing [public spaces](#) that can."

This research is published in *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*.

More information: Katrina M. Moss et al. Not All Play Equipment Is Created Equal: Associations Between Equipment at Home and Children's Physical Activity, *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.1123/jpah.2019-0075](https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2019-0075)

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