



# Make Fitness Fun for the Whole Family

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Children who participate in exercise can develop a variety of physical, mental and social skills in fun, playful ways. Children and teenagers need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day, or most days. This might seem like a lot of time, but it adds up!

Parents can model healthy habits by finding fun ways to be active in their daily routines and making activity a household priority.

## **Put Action in Your Lifestyle**

Regular physical activity is just as important to a healthful lifestyle as smart eating. Apply the same principles of variety, balance and moderation to both your food choices and your physical activities.

- **Variety.** Enjoy many different activities to move different muscles, such as power walking for your heart and leg muscles, gardening for arm muscles and sit-ups for abdominal muscles.
- **Balance.** Because different activities have different benefits, balance your physical activity pattern. For overall fitness, choose activities that build cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, bone strength, balance and flexibility.
- **Moderation.** Move enough to keep fit without overdoing it. At least 30 minutes (60 minutes for children and teens) of moderate physical activity most, and preferably all, days of the week will do.

Here are 10 ways parents and caregivers can encourage active play:

1. Balance sedentary play (such as reading together) with an activity that requires movement such as tag, jumping rope or hopscotch.
2. When and if children attend a child care center, choose one that makes safe, active play a priority.

3. Set aside time each day for active play together, perhaps tossing a ball, having a dance party or taking a walk after a family meal.
4. Designate an inside and an outside area that's safe, where your child can freely jump, roll and tumble.
5. When possible, join a playgroup.
6. Encourage children to try a new physical activity.
7. Give children toys that encourage physical activity such as balls, kites, hula hoops, Frisbees and jump ropes.
8. Limit TV time and keep the TV out of your child's bedroom.
9. Plant a garden. Kids love to water plants, and they'll get excited weeks later when they see their flowers bloom or vegetables grow.
10. Instead of catching a movie or watching TV, pick an activity that requires moving together like taking walk.

### **Don't forget to fuel your activity!**

Once you get your family moving, remember to fuel up for activities or sports. Drink plenty of water before, during and after activities. Children need to drink at least six 8-ounce cups of water per day. Add another eight fluid ounces for every half hour of strenuous activity. For longer activities or when children don't drink enough water, diluted 100% fruit juice or sports drinks can increase their fluid intake.

For a snack before or after physical activities, serve crackers and cheese, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, trail mix, containers of cut-up fruit and sliced vegetables with a low-fat dip.

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