

How to Get More Exercise for Your Children

from the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE)

Unless children are taught to be physically active and how to enjoy sports, chances are they will become physically inactive adults. Here are some tips for encouraging exercise at home and at school.

In The Family

- The best thing a parent can do is be a good role model.
- Plan family activities around your location and climate. Throw a Frisbee in your own backyard or throw a sledding party at the neighborhood park. Go for a walk after supper. Go hiking, picnicking and swimming.
- Pitch a tent. Camping, even a trailer, opens up many possibilities for physical activity - walking, gathering firewood, fishing.
- Leave the car in the garage. Rediscover the bike as transportation and as family recreation. Walk to school or to the store.
- Busy parents, especially single parents, may need to make a special effort to exercise with their children. Go hiking, skating or jogging with your child and enjoy one-on-one time.
- Get lean as you clean. With the decline of rug beaters and washboards, housework no longer provides total physical workout. Still some chores have exercise value. Try vacuuming, mopping, taking out the trash (the farther the better), and stretching exercises while loading and unloading the dishwasher.
- Cook energetically. Introduce your kids to some active cooking tasks: meat pounding, or bread dough rolling.
- Let the children help harvest the food. Depending on where you live and the season, this may involve merely a trip to the supermarket. But when you're in aisle 1 with the shopping cart, you can send the older ones to aisle 12 to pick up that can of mushrooms. If you have a budding accountant, hand her/him a fistful of coupons and send them to find the items as it keeps the kids busy and moving.

- If you have a garden, you can make picking the vegetables part of the daily or weekly routine. And in some areas of the country, there are farms where you can pick your own strawberries or peaches.
- Choose fitness-oriented gifts. A jump rope, mini-trampoline, tennis racket or baseball bat, a youth membership at the YM-or YWCA - the field is wide open. Just be sure the gift is selected with your child's skills and interests in mind.
- Play catch with your children, boys and girls.
- Take advantage of your city's recreation opportunities. Don't be scared off if you consider "fun run" a contradiction in terms. From water volleyball to bird-watching hikes, there is usually something for everyone.
- Most importantly, make exercise fun. So build an obstacle course in the basement. Put on some music and dance around.

Focus for now on moving versus not moving.

Elementary School Children

- Physical fitness should be measured at the beginning and end of each year, and goals should be established for each child.
- After-school supervision should be provided for children of working parents. Limit time spent watching TV.
- Children should be active after school and before supper.
- Discourage doing homework immediately after school to allow children to find some diversion from the structure of the school day.

Curl UP With A Good Physical Education Book

- *The Bear's Bicycle* by Emil McLeod, Little Brown, 1975. For grades K-3 bicycle safety. A boy and his bear have an exciting bicycle ride.
 - *Pretend You're a Cat*, by Jean Marzollo, Dial Books, 1990. Grades K-2 rhyming verses ask the reader to purr like a cat, scratch like dog, leap like a squirrel and bark like a seal.
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