

Exercise: Get Active as a Family



How can you get moving together?

When the family is involved in physical activities together, children learn that being active is fun and makes them feel good. Busy parents can combine family time with exercise time. To get started, try these tips:

- As a family, make a list of activities you'd like to do together.
- Make sure the activities are things everyone can do and enjoy.
- Keep a family physical activity log or calendar.
- Try to plan one or two family activities a week. For ideas, see the suggestions below.
- Once a month, plan something special that involves being active, like a trip to the zoo, a day hike, or camping.
- Use a safe backpack, stroller, or bike trailer so that smaller children can be included in family activities.

Walking

Going for a walk may be the easiest thing you can do together.

- Start with short walks that everyone in the family can do. Add more distance gradually. Younger children can ride a bike or a tricycle. You can pull a wagon in case little ones get tired.
- Go on a scavenger hunt to keep children from being bored on a walk. Keep in mind a list of "treasures" they can find, such as a red leaf, a blue house, a black dog, or an out-of-state license plate.
- Get pedometers for everyone, and work on increasing the number of steps you take on your family walks. See if family members can wear the pedometers all day, and keep a log of everyone's total steps. Adults should work toward 10,000 steps a day. Children who are 6 to 12 years old need more steps—at least 12,000 for girls and at least 15,000 for boys.
- Register as a family for a fun run/walk. If the event is for charity, take a family walk through your neighborhood to collect pledges.

Outdoor activities

Head outside with the family and try some of these ideas.

- Go for a bike ride.
- Join your children in games like hopscotch, tag, jump rope, and hide-and-seek.
- Get involved in family-friendly sports like skiing, skating, swimming, and tennis.
- Play a daily family basketball game in the driveway or at a playground.
- Take up miniature golf or flying-disc golf.
- Fly a kite or throw a Frisbee.

Indoor activities

If the weather is bad, you can still be active indoors.

- Have a family dance night. Create a new dance or exercise routine to a favorite song. Choose a new song each week.
- Go to the mall, and count how many laps you can walk as a family.
- Have a hula hoop contest.
- Set up a fun obstacle course in the basement, garage, or spare room.
- Go to a gym or a local community center.

Set some rules

- Set a limit on TV hours each day.
- Set limits on computer games and Internet use (homework doesn't count).
- Don't use food as a reward for meeting activity goals.
- Make physical activity a priority. Don't let things get in the way of family activity time.