

10 tips

Nutrition
Education Series

be an active family

10 tips for becoming more active as a family



Physical activity is important for children and adults of all ages. Being active as a family can benefit everyone. Adults need 2½ hours a week of physical activity, and children need 60 minutes a day. Follow these tips to add more activity to your family's busy schedule.

1 set specific activity times

Determine time slots throughout the week when the whole family is available. Devote a few of these times to physical activity. Try doing something active after dinner or begin the weekend with a Saturday morning walk.



2 plan ahead and track your progress

Write your activity plans on a family calendar. Let the kids help in planning the activities. Allow them to check it off after completing each activity.

3 include work around the house

Involve the kids in yard work and other active chores around the house. Have them help you with raking, weeding, planting, or vacuuming.



4 use what is available

Plan activities that require little or no equipment or facilities. Examples include walking, jogging, jumping rope, playing tag, and dancing. Find out what programs your community recreation center offers for free or minimal charge.

5 build new skills

Enroll the kids in classes they might enjoy such as gymnastics, dance, or tennis. Help them practice. This will keep things fun and interesting, and introduce new skills!

6 plan for all weather conditions

Choose some activities that do not depend on the weather conditions. Try mall walking, indoor swimming, or active video games. Enjoy outdoor activities as a bonus whenever the weather is nice.

7 turn off the TV

Set a rule that no one can spend longer than 2 hours per day playing video games, watching TV, and using the computer (except for school work). Instead of a TV show, play an active family game, dance to favorite music, or go for a walk.

8 start small

Begin by introducing one new family activity and add more when you feel everyone is ready. Take the dog for a longer walk, play another ball game, or go to an additional exercise class.



9 include other families

Invite others to join your family activities. This is a great way for you and your kids to spend time with friends while being physically active. Plan parties with active games such as bowling or an obstacle course, sign up for family programs at the YMCA, or join a recreational club.



10 treat the family with fun physical activity

When it is time to celebrate as a family, do something active as a reward. Plan a trip to the zoo, park, or lake to treat the family.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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DG TipSheet No. 29
April 2013
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
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Be Physically Active Your Way

Being physically active is one of the most important steps to being healthy. Families play an essential role in helping children learn to be active and stay active throughout their lives. Engaging in physical activity as a family can be a fun way to get everyone moving.

Everyone in the family can benefit from being physically active. Physical activity:

- Improves heart health.
- Builds strong bones and muscles.
- Decreases the likelihood of developing obesity and reduces risk factors for diseases like Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.
- May reduce anxiety and depression and promote positive mental health.
- Improves quality of sleep.
- Increases energy.
- Improves balance and flexibility.

You can help guide your children's participation in physical activities – how much, how often and what type of physical activity they do. You also can help them balance nonactive time periods (watching television, using the computer or talking on the phone) with physical activity.

The keys to getting the entire family up and moving are to choose activities you and your family like and start by doing what you can. Do 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Every bit adds up, and the health benefits increase as you spend more time being active.

Here are a few activities you and your family can do to get started on a path to a healthier lifestyle:

- Give children toys that encourage physical activity, such as balls, kites and jump ropes.
- Encourage children to join a sports team or try a new physical activity.
- Limit TV time and keep the TV out of a child's bedroom.
- Walk your children to and from school or the bus stop a few times a week.
- Build physical activity into your family's daily routine. Take a walk after dinner together or do housework or yard work together.
- Make a new house rule that there is no sitting still during TV commercials.
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity like family day at the park, swim day or bike day.
- Attend family nights or other physical activity events at your child's school or local community center. Volunteer to help with after-school physical activity programs or sports teams.



You are your children's most important role model. Lead an active lifestyle yourself. Your children pay attention to what you do more than what you say.

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This material was partially funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Pub. 3310 (20.6M) Rev. 8/17

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