

Make Fitness a Family Affair

In today's world of cars, computers, TV and every possible convenience imaginable, it's tough for adults and kids alike to be physically active—and it shows.

According to the Surgeon General's report on Physical Activity and Health, more than 60 percent of adults aren't physically active on a regular basis, and 25 percent aren't active at all.

Children soon follow in their parents' footsteps. Nearly half of young people are not vigorously active on a regular basis, with dramatic declines occurring during adolescence.

Sedentary people of all ages miss out on the many benefits of physical activity. These include reducing risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure, as well as promoting a healthy weight, strong bones, muscles and joints and a sense of well-being.

As a parent, you play a vital role in helping your children to stay active for life. Be a role model—be physically active yourself and display a positive attitude that being active is fun and feels good. Provide regular opportunities for the whole family to enjoy physical activity together. This list of ideas will get you started:

- Head out for a family walk or bike ride each evening after dinner.
- Spend a weekend afternoon roller-skating, in-line skating or playing touch football.
- Go on a family vacation that includes lots of hiking, swimming or biking.
- Participate as a family team in a charity fun run, fun walk or car wash.
- Purchase a family membership at the community recreation center, YMCA or health club. Schedule family trips there a few times each week.
- Practice sports such as basketball, baseball or soccer with the kids.
- Take tennis or golf lessons together. Check your local park district for opportunities.
- Team up to do housework or yard work.
- Visit walking-friendly places such as museums and zoos.

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