

Health and Wellness

News You Can Use

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Improve your family's health by focusing on physical activity

Being active as a family increases opportunities for kids and families to be more healthy and happy. Here are some activities you and your family can consider 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.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Facilitate a safe walk to and from school several times a week.
- Walk around the block after a meal.
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity, like family bike day or swim day.
- Make a new house rule: No sitting still during television commercials.
- Issue a family challenge to commit to physical activity five days a week for six weeks.

Other ways to get active

Increasing your family's physical activity is not the only way to help your kids get active. The following are some other ways you can be involved:

- Limit TV time and keep the television out of your child's bedroom.
- Talk to your children's principal or write to your district superintendent to incorporate more physical education in schools.



- Encourage schools to hold recess before lunch to increase physical activity before mealtime.
- Volunteer to help with after-school physical activity programs or local sports teams.

Source: Letsmove.gov

Children's physical activity requirements

Children should get a mix of structured and unstructured physical activity each day. Structured activities include sports, games and gym classes. Unstructured activity is the type your child gets throughout the day. Activity needs vary by age:

- **Ages 1 to 3:** 30 minutes structured activity and one hour unstructured

play most days; should not be sedentary for more than an hour at a time.

- **Ages 3 to 5:** One hour each of structured and unstructured activity most days; should not be sedentary for more than an hour at a time.
- **Ages 5 to 18:** Mix of moderate to vigorous physical activity, at least 60 minutes per day; should not be sedentary for longer than two hours at a time.

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4 fun ideas for family fitness

1. Walk or bicycle everywhere you can

Use muscle power: Bike or walk to the grocery store, library, or to your child's school or sports events. Go for a 30-minute family walk after dinner instead of heading right for the television. Track everyone's steps with a pedometer, and try to add more distance every week. Use a family exercise log or colorful stickers to track your progress. Put your log or chart on the refrigerator as a reminder to keep up the good effort together.

2. Plan active family gatherings

Serve up family fitness as well as cake at your child's birthday party by planning active games such as tag or relay races. Older kids might enjoy throwing a dance party.

Any large gathering of kids is also a great chance to play a team sport. Just head to a nearby soccer field or basketball court. Other active party ideas: a pool party, in-line or ice skating, or climbing at an indoor rock gym.

At family or holiday gatherings, turn off the TV and take a walk around the neighborhood or go for a short hike at a local park. Or get everyone outside for a game of catch or basketball.

3. Sing and dance while you clean

Set aside time for household chores and do them together as a family. Play music as you clean, and take turns choosing favorite songs. Younger children love to help out and can pick up toys or sweep floors while dancing with the broom. Older kids can dust, vacuum, and help make beds.

4. Make yard work less of a chore

Enjoy seasonal yard work together. Younger children can help plant and tend a garden. Older kids can rake leaves into a pile – and then jump in it. Make snow shoveling fun for all by building a snow fort or creating a family of snow people.

Age-appropriate activity

Children of all ages benefit from daily physical activity. Encourage and join your children in age-appropriate activities.

- Babies are growing rapidly and developing the muscle mass that will allow them the ability to stand and walk. Play with your baby and allow him/her to safely explore a stimulating environment.
- Physical activity contributes to overall growth and development in young children. Encourage activity that develops the fundamental motor skills that will last a lifetime.
- School-aged children need to refine their fundamental motor skills. Encourage participation in organized sports, and include physical activity in your family time.
- Teens often experience frustration with the way their bodies look. Physical activity helps keep energy levels up, improves mood and helps keep body weight in a healthy range. Help your teen identify an activity he/she likes if there is no interest in organized sports. This is important because most teens do not get the recommended level of activity.

Source: Zywave, Inc.

Recipe

Healthy recipe: Creamy blueberry-pecan overnight oatmeal



Ingredients

- ½ cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ cup water
- Pinch of salt
- ½ cup blueberries, fresh or frozen, thawed
- 2 tablespoons nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon toasted chopped pecans
- 2 teaspoons pure maple syrup

Directions

1. Combine oats, water and salt in a jar or bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, heat if desired, and top with blueberries, yogurt, pecans and syrup.
2. People with celiac disease or gluten-sensitivity should use oats that are labeled “gluten-free,” as oats are often cross-contaminated with wheat and barley.

Source: Eatingwell.com