



Action for Healthy Kids[®] Virginia

Healthy Families: Being Active with Your Kids

Families that play together enjoy better health. Physical activity should not be reserved for those who participate in team sports or who need to reduce their weight. The benefits of an active lifestyle for each family member are numerous and varied.

- Increased concentration and performance
- Reduced stress
- Reduced blood pressure
- More energy

What is physical activity? Jumping, running, walking, swimming—being physically active involves any type of movement. Being active as a child sets the stage for lifelong healthy habits that promote physical fitness and overall health.

How active is active enough? The 2005 US Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that kids obtain at least one hour of physical activity a day. However, this activity does not need to be non-stop or all at once. Think about a game of “tag.” It may go on for 5 or 10 minutes, and after a rest period, it continues.

Doesn't my child get enough physical activity in Physical Education class at school?

Physical education (PE) is a time for children to learn skills to participate in certain sports or other movement activities. Most children enjoy these lessons and have the opportunity to be active during PE, however, in many schools PE is offered only twice a week—which is not enough for kids.

Simple Ideas to Keep Your Family on the Move!

- Schedule a regular time to be active as a family. Many families have “movie nights” or “game nights” which are great for sharing time together. Why not have a “outdoor activity” night?
- Plan activities everyone can do together such as hiking, biking or swimming.
- Play! Go outside and play tag, kick a soccer ball, or throw a ball around.

Simple Ideas to Keep Your Family on the Move!

- Encourage unplanned activities such as racing to the house after being outdoors or playing chase!
- Have your child’s birthday party at a climbing wall, skating rink, pool or other activity-centered place. Parties do not need to be structured when there are ready-made opportunities for play.
- Learn a new activity with your child. Take a canoeing course, learn to rock climb, take a swim lesson, go cross-country skiing, or learn to play tennis. Your child will be more likely to try new activities if you try them with him.
- If you are physically active, show your child how much you value and enjoy fitness.
- Go for an evening walk before or after dinner. Children love to spend special time with their parents. Use this as an opportunity to catch up on your day.
- When it is rainy outside, be creative! You can set up an indoor obstacle course, play hide and seek, or even dance.
- Cold weather means bundling up and heading outside to make leaf piles to jump in, build giant snowmen, and sled when it is snowing. Or find indoor recreation opportunities such as tennis, basketball or swimming.
- Limit television and video game time to no more than 2 hours per day on the weekends and 1 hour during the week.

Be an Active Family

Adults and kids who are physically active reduce their risk of overweight, heart disease, and cancer. Active kids are also less likely to smoke, use drugs or drink alcohol. These are certainly important reasons for staying active! Equally important is the quality time you spend as a family and the establishment of lifelong healthy habits in your children.

Make A Plan

Write some ideas here for how to be physically active with your children.

