

Encouraging Exercise

Make exercise a part of your lifestyle. Your goal should be some type of exercise every day, or at the very least, 3 to 4 times a week. Try to do some kind of aerobic activity that requires continuous physical activity (elevates your heart rate) without stopping for at least 20 to 30 minutes each time. Do the activity as often as possible, but do not exercise to the point of pain because this can lead to injury.

Like all things, exercise can be overdone. Signs you may be overdoing it include:

- Weight that falls below what is normal for your age, height, and build
- It starts to interfere with your normal activities
- Muscles that become so sore that you risk injuring yourself

If you notice any of these signs, talk with your pediatrician before health problems occur.

Besides the physical and mental health benefits, regular physical activity can also help increase self-confidence, offer the opportunity to learn new skills and meet people with similar interests. To make more time for exercise, limit the amount of time you and your family watch television or play computer or video games. Whenever possible, eat 3 healthy meals a day, including at least 2 to 4 servings of fruit and 3 to 5 servings of vegetables each day. Limit your intake of fat, cholesterol, salt, and sugar. For even better health, don't smoke, drink alcohol, or do other drugs.

Exercise should also be a routine part of your family's day, just like eating, and sleeping. It may help to plan a physical activity as a family. Most people find that it is more fun to exercise with someone else. More importantly, though, is that everyone *likes* the exercise or activity. Everyone is more apt to stay in the habit of doing whatever activity they choose if it is one that they enjoy.

Try to pick a "life sport" that you or your family enjoy. Unlike a competitive team sport like football or baseball, a life sport is any kind of physical exercise or activity that you can do throughout your life. Examples of life sports are:

- Swimming
- Golf
- Bicycling
- Jogging
- Tennis
- Walking
- Skating

Regular exercise should include aerobic activity. Aerobic activity is continuous and it makes you breathe harder and increases your heart rate. This type of exercise increases your fitness level and makes your heart and lungs work more efficiently. It also helps to maintain a normal weight by burning off excess fat. Examples of aerobic activities are brisk walking, basketball, bicycling, swimming, in-line or ice skating, soccer, jogging, and taking an aerobics or step class. Baseball and football do not involve as much continuous exercise because you are not active the whole time. In general, the more aerobic an activity, the more calories – and eventually fat – will be burned.

Any type of regular, physical activity is good for your body. Household chores, such as mowing the lawn, vacuuming, or scrubbing, involve exercise and may have fitness benefits, depending on how vigorously you do the chores. Just about any physical activity will improve fitness. For example, walking is better than riding in a car, and using the stairs is better than taking an elevator. Making small changes like these in your everyday life can make you and your family more physically fit. The most important thing is to keep moving.

Be sure to include stretching exercises in your daily routine. Before doing any physical activity, stretch out your muscles. This warms them up and helps protect against injury. Stretching makes your muscles and joints more flexible, too. It is also important to stretch out *after* you exercise to cool down your muscles.

Types of Exercise

Aspects of physical fitness

To be physically fit, you must work on all aspects of fitness, including the following:

- Cardio respiratory endurance (aerobic fitness) – This is the ability of the heart, lungs, and circulatory system to deliver oxygen and nutrients to all areas of your body. When you are active, you breathe harder and your heart beats faster so that your body is able to get the oxygen it needs. If you are not fit, your heart and lungs have to work extra hard during physical activity.
- Body composition (body fat) – This is the percentage of body weight that is fat. Overweight people have more body fat in relation to the amount of bone and muscle in their bodies than do people who are physically fit. Overeating, not exercising enough, or both often lead to more body fat. Being overweight increases your risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart attacks.
- Muscle strength and endurance – This is the amount of work and the amount of time that your muscles are able to do a certain activity before they get tired, such as lifting heavy objects or in-line skating.
- Flexibility – Flexibility is the ability to move joints and stretch muscles through a full range of motion. For example, people who are very flexible can bend over and touch the floor easily. A person with poor flexibility is more likely to get hurt during physical activity.

Fitness Activity Chart		
Activity	Calories Burned During 10 Minutes Of Continuous Activity	
	77-lb Person (35 kg)	132-lb Person (60 kg)
Basketball (game)	60	102
Cross country skiing	23	72
Bicycling (9.3 mph or 15	36	60

km/h)		
Judo	69	118
Running (5 mph or 8 km/h)	60	90
Sitting (complete rest)	9	12
Soccer (game)	63	108
Swimming (30 m/min or 33 yd)		
Breaststroke	34	58
Freestyle	43	74
Tennis	39	66
Volleyball (game)	35	60
Walking		
2.5 mph or 4 km/h	23	34
3.7 mph or 6 km/h	30	43
kg = kilogram; mph = miles per hour; km = kilometer, m = meter		
Modified from Bar-Or O. <i>Pediatric Sports Medicine for the Practitioner</i> . New York, NY: Springer-Verlag; 1983: 349-350		
Ferguson JM. <i>Habits, Not Diets</i> . Palo Alto, CA: Bull Publishing Co; 1988 Used with permission		

Modified 2010 from the AAP by Dr. Amanda Dropic