



15 Ideas for Family Fitness

Kids these days are spending too much time sitting still, and it's becoming a major health risk. American children 8 years old and above spend an average of 6.5 hours a day engaging with media technologies including watching TV, using the computer and playing video games.¹ Studies have shown that the more TV kids watch, the more likely they are to be overweight.²

Increasing physical activity improves cardiovascular fitness, helps prevent obesity, promotes a healthy lifestyle, boosts self-esteem and confidence, and reduces stress. You don't need to have a lot of fancy equipment or a membership at a health club—there are many ways to make your family's lifestyle more active.

To overcome resistance from reluctant youngsters, it helps to make the

activity fun. For example, don't just run with a young child—run like a penguin or hop like a kangaroo! Or have a destination like the park or zoo!

Here are 15 ideas for getting your family on the move:

- Take active vacations (hiking, swimming, skiing).
- At the mall or when running errands, use the stairs rather than the elevator.

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- Get pedometers and have a contest to see who takes the most steps in a given week.
- Start a new tradition: take the whole family out for an after-dinner walk around the neighborhood or park.
- Take on active chores as a family (gardening, raking leaves, shoveling snow, or washing the car).
- Spend an afternoon at the local playground.
- Play a sport together (basketball, soccer, baseball, softball, touch football).
- Dance to your favorite music.
- Go for a family bike ride.
- Plant a family garden.
- Play miniature golf.
- Go to the zoo.
- Take the dog for a long walk.
- Whenever possible, walk short distances rather than using your car. When you drive, park a little farther away from the store.
- Play games that your kids love (tag, Simon Says, Red Light-Green Light, Duck-Duck Goose)

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. 2005. *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8–18 Year Olds*. Menlo Park, CA.

² Center for Health Improvement. 2005. *Preschoolers Increasingly Overweight: Preventing Childhood Obesity: A Prop 10 Opportunity*. Updated Policy Brief.