



Everyone in the family needs exercise, so why not try these fun ways to help every member of your family stay fit? Kids will look forward to exercising when it's part of a fun family time together.

Get sporty

Try swimming, hiking, biking, horseback riding, bowling, dancing, tennis, and in-line skating. While at first your children may need your help, the time spent helping them develop skills will be worth it as they become more and more skilled. One smart family plays tennis together and brings many baskets of balls with them to the court. The kids hit and chase the balls while the grown-ups get in as much tennis as they can. These activities are fun and healthy for everyone, and your kids will develop strong muscles and gain skills they can use for a lifetime.



Join your kids in their sports

If your children are in an organized sport, take some time to practice with them. One mom goes out to regularly kick a ball around with her soccer-playing kids. The kids get practice, Mom gets exercise, and everyone has fun together.

Play games together

Try a family game of kickball. This works great even with the youngest of kids if you have a really big ball. They might need help knowing which way to run. Try the old games, such as hopscotch and jump-rope. Try a family race. Play Frisbee or ball. Badminton or volleyball can be fun, especially if you use a balloon for badminton and a supersized ball for volleyball. These games don't have to be competitive—just relax and enjoy playing together.

Babies need exercise too

While they are not ready for jumping jacks and toe touches, babies have their own needs for exercise. What should you be doing with your baby? Give young babies ten minutes of tummy time a day. Young children should be put to sleep on their backs because it lessens the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. But this means that many babies do not spend time on their tummies. It is recommended that young babies have tummy time to help them build muscles in their neck and shoulders. Many babies who are not used to this may cry during tummy time. You can make it fun by talking and playing with your baby during tummy time. If your baby needs a break from tummy time, try again later. But keep helping your child strengthen those important muscles.

For older infants, give them a chance to get things for themselves. If a ball rolls under the crib, encourage your child to get it herself, rather than get it for her. Play games and use toys to encourage older infants to crawl and cruise, holding onto the furniture and to walk. Toys tempt them to use these skills, giving them needed practice. Remember, keep it fun!



Household chores are great exercise

It's good for kids to help with household chores. Plenty of chores are active: Raking leaves, shoveling snow, and digging and weeding in the garden are all good exercise. Other jobs that are good for kids include carrying in groceries and helping to wash the car. Turn on the music and dance while doing indoor housework. This will make it more fun and you'll all get plenty of exercise.

Physical activity has plenty of benefits for kids. They sleep and eat better, and many child development specialists believe children behave better when they have enough exercise. Keeping in good physical shape will help your children develop a positive self-concept. Physical activity can also reduce stress. It can help children handle the normal stresses of growing up as well as any unusual stress along the way. And best of all, you help set your child on a path of healthy living.

Tricks for getting more exercise

Parents of young children face more challenges in getting exercise than parents with older children. Younger children need more supervision and they have fewer independent skills. But there are some tricks to fitting exercise in for you while your kids are having fun. Take the kids to the park with their tricycles or bikes and circle around the path, with them biking and you walking. If you have a toddler who can't go very fast, tape an old broom handle to the bike and push her. You get exercise and they love going fast like the big kids. If your kids are independent bikers you may find yourself out of breath trying to keep up!

Swimming is great exercise for kids, but when they are really little you must supervise them closely, making it impossible to swim laps for exercise. While you are staying within arms' reach of your little swimmers, you can be jogging in the water. Water has much greater resistance than air and makes your workout much more effective.

It's easy to just sit on the bench at the park while your little ones play, but if you get up and play with them on the equipment, not only will you have fun, you'll be energizing yourself. It's easy to feel drained when you have young children, but the more exercise you do, the more energy you will have. Exercise also helps manage stress, and being a parent can be very stressful. So help your kids and yourself to greater well-being by finding ways to fit exercise into your family life.

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