



Becoming a fit family

Being physically active together is good for you and your child. Not only can you build a strong and fit body, but exercise can help reduce your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure. Best of all, it can give you fun times together.

A regular walk is a great way to be active together. Walk around your neighborhood. Children love to notice the seasonal changes. Since young children need to stop and consider what they see, don't expect to go very far or to keep a steady pace. If you want to walk at a steady pace, get out the bicycles, scooters, or skateboard and let the children ride while you walk. Since they can go faster, you will have to walk at a fast pace or even jog to keep up. This gives both you and the children a good workout.

Add some time for sports together:

play catch, baseball, basketball, or tennis with your child. Children love the special attention they get during this kind of game. Go swimming together. One single mom made it a family tradition to go swimming on Sunday afternoon with the children. She found the bickering of her four children was reduced, and both she and the children felt relaxed and happy afterward.

Work together on household

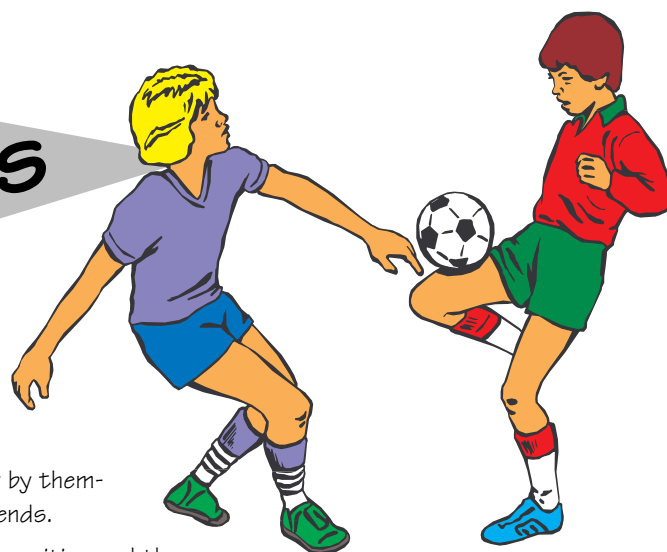
chores. Ask everyone to run and put things away as fast as they can for fifteen minutes. Not only will your house be cleaner, everyone will get a bit of exercise.

Don't be a couch potato. Limit TV,

videos, video games, and computer games. Eating and snacking in front of the television is double trouble because it causes overeating as well as inactivity.



When are organized sports good for children?



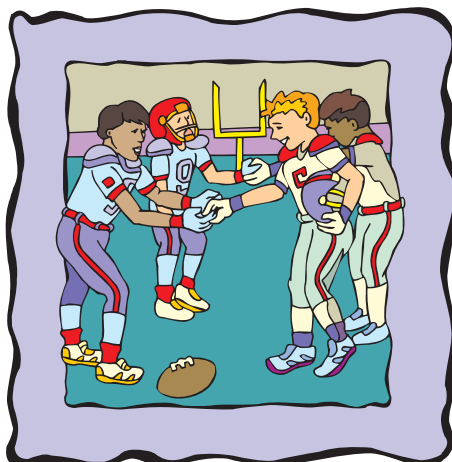
Team sports can be a great fitness choice for kids. Sports can help children build strong, healthy bodies, but make sure you choose wisely for your child. Preschoolers are too young for organized sports. They get upset by losing and can easily become bored, distracted, and maybe even disruptive. Age eight is a good time to begin team sports. Children are ready to learn from coaching tips and about teamwork. Look for a sports program that has positive attitudes. Many children love team sports at first, but are driven away by parents or coaches who are too critical or competitive. Help the kids focus on improving their skills and having fun while playing, rather than on winning.

Everyone dreams of having their child be an athletic star—especially in our country, where top athletes are heroes and role models. Of course, very few people have the unique qualities that create superstar athletes. But with effort, most of us can become skilled in one or more sports. Let your child concentrate on one sport at a time, so there is time left for family activities.

It's easy to get involved in too many things and leave little time for relaxing together as a family. Insist on regular family dinners. If a sport takes too much time away from the family, consider another one. Children need unstructured

time when they can play by themselves and with their friends.

If you keep the attitude positive and the time commitment under control, sports can be an important part of a child's life.



Kids need moms and dads, not coaches

Share your love of your favorite sport with your child—whether it is hockey, baseball, basketball, volleyball, or tennis. Resist the urge to become a coach to your child. Playing together as partners and just having a good time will create happy memories and a shared love of sports. Children will stay involved longer and enjoy the activity more if it is playful rather than educational. Coming on too strong might make your children grow to dislike the sport you wish they would love.

SMART SNACKING

Children need snacks to get the energy they need. Making good decisions about snacks is important. Try not to snack or eat in front of the television. Eat snacks while sitting down at a table. This way children will not eat more than their bodies need, as they are less distracted and can better listen to their body signals.

Snack time is a great time to get more fruits and vegetable into your children's diet. Cut up fresh vegetables and serve with a dip or salad dressing. Offer seasonal fruits. The best drinks are milk and water. Sugary drinks such as sodas and juice are "empty calories" that fill you up, but don't supply any nutrients. Teaching smart snacking will give your child good habits for a healthy life.



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Developed by the Penn State Better Kid Care Program
253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA 16801 • Phone: 1-800-452-9108 • Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu.

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director, Lyn Horning, Program Associate

Developed by Sheila Milnes