

# Move It!

## EXERCISE TIPS

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## Exercise is healthy fun!

Children who are active tend to be more confident, have a greater sense of well-being, and experience better health. The only way to help keep kids healthy and fit is to get them to do physical activity from the time they are small children. That means limit their time in front of the TV and video games, and start moving!

### Tips for Raising Heart-Healthy and Active Children

**Set a good example!** You can help your children develop good physical activity habits at an early age. Don't just sit at home in front of the TV or computer. Go for a walk or take the kids to the playground.

**Limit television, movies, videos and computer games** to less than two hours a day. Use a simple cooking timer to let your children know when "time's up."

Plan family outings and vacations that involve **walking, hiking, bicycling, or swimming.**

Give your children **household chores that require some physical effort.** This includes raking leaves, scrubbing floors, and taking out the garbage. Be sure that the chore is the right amount of work for the right age. A four-year old should not scrub a floor, but can help fold laundry or make beds.

Ask your children what **sports and activities** they like. Find out about lessons or clubs for these types of activities. Most schools and community centers offer free or low-cost sports activities in the afternoons and weekends. Check your local newspaper's Community Calendar for suggestions.

**If it's safe, walk or ride a bike instead of driving.** Use stairs instead of elevators and escalators. Park your car a little further away than usual so you and your children can walk a little more.

When buying gifts for your children or family members, **choose items that will help with their physical fitness** – a jump rope, hula hoop, mini-trampoline, tennis racket, baseball bat, or even a youth membership at the local YMCA or YWCA.

When your children say "I'm bored," **suggest a fun activity that gets them moving.** Turn on some music and have them make up a dance contest. Challenge them to a jumping jack contest. Have them count how many steps it takes to walk around the house or apartment. Anything to get the children up and moving!



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## Here are a few ideas to make physical activity a part of your child's daily life:

### Preschoolers

- Dancing** Turn on music and dance together, hop around, squat, clap your hands.
- Jump the River** Lay a jump rope or towel on the ground, or draw a line with chalk. Pretend the line is a river. Challenge your child to jump from one side of the river to the other. You can "widen the river" by using two ropes, opening the towel or drawing a thicker line with the chalk.
- The Mirror Game** Pretend that your child is a mirror and they have to follow your movements. Begin making slow movements that you can do in place, like raising or lowering your arm, nodding your head, or clapping hands. Increase the activity and speed as the game continues. Take turns being "the mirror."
- The Track Meet** Tell your child to pretend she's in a track meet at the Olympics. Create low "hurdles" for your child to jump over (such as a cushion or book), and chairs to crawl under.

### Grade Schoolers

- Coin Adventure** Turn an ordinary neighborhood walk into an adventure. As you and your child step out the front door, flip a coin. If it's tails, turn left. If it's heads, turn right. Continue this at every corner. You never know where you'll end up! This is a great opportunity to giggle with your kids and enjoy some time talking and exploring.
- Obstacle Course** This is a great form of exercise and play!
- Walking or hopping along a winding garden hose.
  - Crawling under lawn chairs.
  - Balancing along a string placed on the ground.
  - Walking with a ball between your knees.
- Obstacle builders could be lawn furniture, a hose, string or rope, sprinkler, balls, water balloons, hula hoops and jump rope.
- Monkey Bar Challenge** At the playground, have your child go across the monkey bars and measure the number of bars they can cross without letting go. Practice often to see how many bars they can add over time.
- Activity on Wheels** Rollerblade, skate or ride bikes together. It's best to stay on paths made especially for these activities in parks, but if you need to go on streets or roads be sure your child knows proper road safety and arm signals. Your children must ALWAYS wear a helmet when on a bike or skates. Knee pads and elbow pads are also recommended.

### Teenagers

- Register for a fun run or walk.** Spend time together training for the event.
- Purchase a family gym membership** and work out together weekly.
- Play tennis or basketball together.** Most parks have free tennis and basketball courts.
- Implement a daily family walk** before or after dinner. Be sure to stay on well-lit streets. Walk on sidewalks or along the side of the road with traffic.
- Work together in the yard** raking leaves, planting flowers and trimming trees. If you don't have your own yard, volunteer your time at a neighborhood park or garden. Not only will your community look better, but your family's health will also be improved.

**Sources:** Americanheart.org  
National Safety Council – Family Safety and Health Magazine  
MovingandLearning.com



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