



## Tips for Raising Heart-Healthy, Active Children

- Help your children develop good physical activity habits at an early age by setting a good example yourself. Practice heart-healthy habits.
- Encourage at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous play or physical activity daily.
- Limit television, movies, videos and computer games to less than two hours a day. Encourage physical activity during the rest of leisure time.
- Plan family outings and vacations that involve vigorous activities such as hiking, bicycling, skiing, swimming, etc.
- Give your children some household chores that require physical exertion, keeping in mind their levels of strength, coordination and maturity. Mowing lawns, raking leaves, scrubbing floors and taking out the garbage not only teach responsibility but can be good exercise.
- Observe sports and activities your children like, then find out about lessons and clubs. Some children thrive on team sports; others prefer individual activities. Some activities, like tennis and swimming, can be enjoyed for a lifetime and are much easier to learn during childhood.
- If it's safe to walk or bike rather than drive, do so. Take the stairs instead of elevators and escalators. Increase the distances you and your children walk.
- Stay involved in your child's physical education classes at school. At daycare, make sure the kids are physically active at least 20 minutes a day. Ask about frequency of classes and activity, class size, curriculum (instruction in lifetime fitness activities as well as team sports should be emphasized), physical fitness assessments and teachers' qualifications (should hold appropriate certification in physical education and be appropriate role models). Physical fitness should be measured at the beginning and end of each year, and goals should be established for each child. Encourage your school board to emphasize skills students can use for the rest of their lives.
- Discourage homework immediately after school to let children find some diversion from the structure of the school day. Kids should be active after school and before dinner.
- Choose fitness-oriented gifts — a jump rope, mini-trampoline, tennis racket, baseball bat or a youth membership at the local YMCA or YWCA. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that trampolines *never* be used at home, in routine gym classes or on playgrounds. Select the gift with your child's age, skills and interests in mind.
- Take advantage of your city's recreation opportunities — from soccer leagues to fun runs. Check out the various camps or organizations like the Sierra Club that sponsor outdoor activities such as camping, hiking trips and bird watching.
- Free your infant from restraints as much as possible. Strollers and playpens are high on convenience but low on activity potential. Try to unleash your diapered dynamo whenever and wherever he or she can safely move around.
- When your children are bored, suggest something that gets them moving, like playing catch or building a snowman in the yard.

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