

Healthy Connections: Move More as a Family



Introduction

When families are active together, they build healthy habits that last a lifetime and strengthen relationships through positive interactions. Parents and guardians who encourage physical activity and lead by example by being active themselves help children see the many benefits that moving more can bring to both physical and mental well-being. Moving more as a family is fun and allows families to spend quality time together all while improving their health.

Importance of Moving More

Moving your body matters at every age. It keeps your heart and lungs strong, sharpens your focus, lifts your mood and reduces risk of depression, builds muscle and bone strength, improves sleep, and helps you maintain a healthy weight.

But as a country, the U.S. is falling short: only a quarter of adults and just one in five teens get the activity they need each week.

When families move together — whether it's playing outside, walking after dinner, or dancing in the living room — kids learn early that movement is a normal, joyful part of life. Those early habits can grow into a lifetime of better health.

Creating Active Habits

Creating active habits as a family starts with building an environment that supports movement. Limiting screen time, offering toys and activities that encourage physical play, and keeping a positive attitude toward being active all help set the tone. Once those pieces are in place, it becomes easier to make regular use of them and turn movement into a natural part of daily life.



Developing these habits may feel challenging at first but connecting movement to routines you already do can make the transition smoother. Instead of coming home from work, school, or child care and settling into screen time, choose an activity that gets everyone moving — like a walk to the park, a lap around the block, a dance party, or outdoor play at home. Walking to and from school, work, or errands are other simple ways to build activity into your day. It may require planning a little extra time, but you might be surprised by how short this additional time feels once it becomes habit.

You can also weave movement into everyday chores. Turn tasks like vacuuming, gardening, sweeping, or making beds into family activities, and add music to make them more fun. When physical activity feels enjoyable and shared, it becomes something the whole family looks forward to.

Indoor

- » Dance parties
- » Hit the balloon
- » Bubbles
- » Active chores
- » Simon says
- » Duck duck goose
- » Red light green light
- » Family yoga
- » Floor is lava

Physical Activity Guidelines

- **Children age 3 to 5:** Should be physically active throughout the day, and caregivers should encourage movement when they play.
- **Children and adolescents age 6 to 17:** Need 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity each day, including aerobic activity, bone strengthening, and muscle strengthening activities (each at least 3 days/week).
- **Adults:** Should strive for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, and muscle-strengthening activity (such as resistance or weights) on at least 2 days per week. Gain more benefits by being active 300 minutes per week.

Be a Role Model

Guardians have a powerful opportunity to model active, healthy behaviors for their children. When kids see the adults in their lives genuinely enjoying movement, they're far more likely to want to join in and be active themselves. Building active habits as a family becomes much easier when everyone participates together.

It helps to start with activities that parents and guardians truly enjoy. Children are highly attuned to both verbal and non-verbal cues, and they can tell when adults are having fun — or when they're not. Choosing games, routines, and movement that feel enjoyable for the adults sets a positive tone and makes the experience more engaging for little ones.

FAMILY ACTIVITY IDEAS

Outdoor

- » Walk after supper
- » Obstacle course in the yard
- » Hopscotch
- » Zoo visits
- » Jump rope
- » Bike, scooter, tricycle rides (wear helmets)
- » Basketball
- » Soccer
- » Baseball
- » Parks
- » Tag
- » Gardening

Get Moving

You can enjoy active, meaningful time with your family without spending any money. Both indoor and outdoor movement matter, but being outside offers added benefits such as easing anxiety, boosting mood, supporting natural movement, improving focus, strengthening social skills, and sparking creativity through time in nature.

Try a mix of indoor and outdoor activities to discover what your family enjoys most and weave those favorites into your weekly routine. During each activity, talk with children about how your body and mind feel — sharing positive experiences helps them build awareness and motivation. On walks or hikes, turn exploration into a game by searching for different colors or shapes. A simple activity like “Walk the Rainbow,” where you point out items of each color as you find them, keeps everyone engaged and makes movement feel playful.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation

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