

It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Move More, Rest Well

Back to School with Fun Fitness for Successful Kids

Physical education (PE)

For healthy lifestyles, children need both free play and instruction on new physical skills. The ideal place for PE is as part of the regular school day. PE should be taught by qualified PE teachers for at least 30 minutes every day. In addition to daily PE in schools, families can take advantage of quality instruction in the community, like swimming or dance lessons. Quality physical education should be age-appropriate, fun and continuously active for all students.

Exploratory play

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) thinks active play is so vital for kids that they wrote a paper on getting families to play together more. According to AAP, play helps children mentally, physically, socially and emotionally. All you have to do is turn off the TV. Go explore the yard, the neighborhood, the playground or the park. Explore on your feet or on a bike. Splash in a stream, tumble in the leaves or do somersaults in the grass.

Organized activities

Active play can be organized—by adults or children. Think about all the old-fashioned activities that families did before everyone was glued to the TV or computer. There are active indoor games such as Simon Says or Twister®. There are dozens of games to play outdoors. Try hopscotch, jump rope, dodgeball, Frisbee®, badminton and volleyball. You can also organize trips to the bowling alley, skating rink or swimming pool.

Competitive athletics

Team sports also provide the chance for physical activity—so long as kids get to play sports that they like. Sign your children up for sports that they want to play—rather than the ones you played as a child. Different children are better at and enjoy different types of activities. Some do not enjoy competitive sports at all. Go to practices regularly to be sure that all children are getting equal chances to play—rather than just sitting on the bench.



Looking for a simple way to fit FITNESS into children's busy days? Make walking (or biking) to and from school the normal mode of transportation. Children will get the physical benefits. You'll save on those expensive gas tank fill-ups! Walk or bike with your children when you can. Organize a neighborhood walking school bus or bike-pool for the days when you are not able to go with them. Find out how to get involved in safe routes to school in your community at www.walktoschool.org/ and www.saferoutesinfo.org/.



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