

Family Fitness

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Goal of the Lesson:

To teach families the importance of physical activity to promote healthy lifestyles and to aid in the prevention of childhood obesity.

Objectives:

1. Identify the health impacts of physical inactivity for families and children.
2. Identify the benefits of physical activity.
3. Identify ways that individual families can increase their physical activity levels in ways that interest them and fit into their lifestyles.

Leader Resources:

1. Powerpoint Program: *Taking the Steps Toward a Healthy Family* (Available online at www.communityprograms.unl.edu)

Participant Resources:

1. *Family Fitness for All Ages*
2. *Taking the Steps Toward a Healthy Family* slides handout
3. *That was Then, This is Now*

Introduction:

Families are getting bigger but not in numbers. Among children and teens, almost 9 million are overweight, triple the number in 1980. More than 10 percent of children between the ages of 2 and 5 are overweight, double the number in 1980. Being active during the K-12 school years is important for establishing healthy habits on into adulthood.

Diseases and health problems once only found in adults now are being diagnosed in children and teens, including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Increasing physical activity is important because the health benefits associated with it include improving heart health, controlling blood pressure, managing weight and helping prevent osteoporosis.

Introductory Activity:

Have participants share what their favorite physical activity was as a child. How does that compare to what we see children doing today?

Pass out the worksheet “That Was Then, This is Now,” from the “It’s Time to Get Moving” curriculum. Using precut activity cards from the worksheet, divide into small groups and have each group discuss how these activities were done 100 years ago and how they are done today. How do they compare? Share findings with larger group.

What is different in children’s lives today as compared to the past? How has that made our lives easier? And how has that made our lives ‘lazier’?

People who are inactive are twice as likely to get diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Time and access to safe places to exercise are two of the main reasons people don’t get enough fitness. However, exercise programs in school and at workplaces do a good job getting people moving.

Eating a healthy diet and being physically active are part of good health. So, what does it mean to be active? Name some activities kids can do to stay active. Can you do some of these activities together? Examples include: dancing, jumping rope and riding a bicycle.

Only about half of the nation’s children are active regularly (45-60 minutes most days of the week), and one-quarter of our youth spend at least four hours a day watching television. Kids especially need to get moving after a long day at school where they don’t get that much freedom. Coming home to flop on the couch and watch television does not help improve their lifestyles as much as a bike ride!

- **Why is it good for our bodies to be active?** Physical activity helps build strong bones and muscles and keeps your heart healthy. That’s good for people of ALL ages!



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- **What does it mean to be nonactive? Name some activities you do when your body is nonactive. What about your kids? Do they see you do more of the nonactive activities instead of the active ones?** Examples include: studying, reading and watching television.
- **Are all nonactive things bad for your kids?** Why not? Kids still need to study, read and listen in school. Explain that some things we do are active and some things are not active. However, doing nonactive things ALL the time can make us become unhealthy.
- **We need to be active for at least 60 minutes every day.** Discuss activities kids could do with their friends, family and by themselves to be more active.

Finish up with PowerPoint program: *Taking the Steps Toward a Healthy Family*.

Script:

1. **Taking the Steps Toward a Healthy Family**
2. **Remember when ...**
 - **time after school was spent riding your bike around the neighborhood?**
 - **jump rope contests and playing hide and seek were what you did with friends?**
 - **you chased lightening bugs on a warm summer night?**
3. **And now family time is ...**
 - **watching television together and using the remote to change the channel.**
 - **spending time on the computer to research projects instead of walking to the local library.**
 - **talking on cell phones that are right by your side instead of getting up to answer the phone.**
 - **playing games: not board games, but electronic ones.**
4. **Caring for your child**
Why you should be aware of their physical activities.
 - **Childhood obesity can lead to higher rates of adult illness, including diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.**
 - **Exercise and being involved in children's physical activities are the key prevention to childhood obesity.**

The epidemic of childhood obesity and childhood diabetes is alarming. Obese children may face diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, high health-care costs straining the medical system and early deaths as they reach middle age.

5. **Parenting for health**
 - **Pay attention to your child.**
 - **Don't use food as a comfort measure.**
 - **Watch your own weight. Be a role model.**
 - **Don't focus on the weight — focus on healthy living.**
 - **Limit TV time.**

Show them you care. Kids who are not tended to by adults have higher rates of obesity. But monitoring the amounts your child eats or nagging your child to eat at mealtime can interfere with your child's response to hunger and feeling full. These two responses are an important basis for healthy eating behaviors.

Focus on *healthy living*: good eating habits and physical activity. Limit television-viewing time. TV-viewing can directly cause obesity through replacing physical activity, and increased eating and reduced metabolism while watching.

6. **Shut Off That Television!**
 - **Limit computer and TV time early in life. Place limits on "inactive" time and do not place TVs and computers in your child's bedroom.**

There is a direct relationship between obesity in children and hours of television watching. More than 60 percent of childhood obesity is directly linked to too much television. Since the average child spends about 24 hours a week in front of the TV, limiting the amount of time your child spends watching television, playing video games or surfing the Internet will free up a lot of time for physical activities.
7. **Get Yourself Moving!**
If you want an active child, be active yourself. Children of parents who both exercise are about six times more likely to be active than are children whose parents are not. What would your family enjoy doing together?
8. **Promote Physical Education in Schools**
Physical education in schools helps keep kids active! Schools and parents should work together to increase the number and hours of physical education classes and to encourage more activity among students.
9. **Promote Physical Activity, NOT Exercise!**
 - **Take trips to the playground together.**
 - **Encourage using tricycles and bicycles.**
 - **Have a kid-friendly yard with safe outdoor toys.**
 - **Make up a neighborhood play group.**
 - **Make sure it is done in FUN and not to win.**

Exercise is **not** a form of physical punishment. Just getting kids moving is the key. Free-play activities such as tag, hide-and-seek, hopscotch or jumping rope can be great for burning calories and improving fitness.

Does this mean all kids need to be athletes? No! Kids are all different. What do yours like to do? It might be swimming, exploring in the woods or fishing, but any is better than just sitting around watching television for entertainment.

10. Start When the Kids are Young!

- Push your baby in a stroller or encourage ways to use a walker.
- Let your toddler push a stroller filled with toys.

11. Encourage a Lifelong Love of Activity

An optimal exercise plan for children and adults must:

- **be fun;**
- **be readily available every day;**
- **be part of your daily life;**
- **incorporate variety;**
- **include activities that can be done independently; and**
- **include an aerobic exercise, like running or walking, as the major form of activity four or five days a week.**

12. Let's Go Play! It's time for a change — reintroduce PLAYTIME!

Telling your kids that fitness is important is not enough — you need to show them. If you're not the type to work out, don't throw in the towel just yet!

13. What makes for an ideal family fitness activity?

- **It appeals to both children and adults.**
- **It's convenient to do.**
- **It's budget-friendly.**
- **It takes place in a family-friendly environment.**
- **The total activity time lasts 60 minutes a day — but remember it doesn't have to be all at once!**

Swimming, cross-country skiing, walking, biking and inline skating are activities that appeal to both young and old. The easier you make it for everyone to exercise, the more likely you are to make the effort. Just don't make the mistake of assuming that you have to spend a fortune in order to reap the benefits of physical fitness.

14. Getting Started for Fun!

- **Make it fun.**
- **Head for the park.**
- **Join a club.**
- **Go for a walk indoors.**
- **Hit the pool!**
- **Take a WALK!**

15. Other Steps for Success

- **30 minutes a day allows health benefits.**
- **More than 30 minutes at a higher intensity offers better results.**

16. Taking That First Step

- **Set a realistic goal.**
- **Create a family fun challenge.**
- **Park and walk.**
- **Plan a weekly family fitness outing.**
- **Turn your neighborhood into a tourist destination.**
- **Take 10 times three.**
- **Take the dog for a walk!**
- **Window shop 'til you drop!**
- **If you can't turn it off, turn it up!**
- **Climb every stair.**

Set a realistic goal. Wear a pedometer to see how many steps you take each day. From that measurement, try setting a goal of increasing your steps, working up to 10,000 steps per day. About 2,000 steps equal a mile.

Create a family fun challenge. Choose a destination for a family trip and calculate the number of steps it would take to get there. Post the goal on the refrigerator and log each family members daily steps. Once the total goal is reached, reward your family with a visit to that location.

Park and walk. Drive halfway to see your friends or family and walk the final distance.

Plan a weekly family fitness outing.

Turn your neighborhood into a tourist destination.

Take 10 times three. Find three, 10-minute segments each day to take a brief walk, play touch football, march in place or even dance! These quick spurts will go a long way in helping you meet and surpass your family goals.

Take the dog for a walk. Walk your dog, the neighbor's dog, or maybe your cat! Your pet will love you for it.

Window shop 'til you drop. Make the most of your shopping chores by taking as many extra steps as you can. Park your car at the far end of the mall and walk to the entrance. Do a couple of extra laps around the shopping mall.

If you can't turn it off, turn it up. If you and your family are glued to the tube, get up and walk around the room during the commercials or during halftime. Remember, every step can make a difference!

Climb every stair. Instead of taking the elevator, try the stairs.

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