

Family Fitness

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Lesson Goals:

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 physical activity levels in ways that interest them and fit into their lifestyles.

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 pre-cut 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, diabetes, etc. 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 at 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!
- **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.



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Family Fitness for All Ages

How do you keep up a regular fitness program for you and your family? It is easier than you think. What do you enjoy doing? What does your family enjoy? Find some physical activities you all enjoy and do them together! Families that play together, stay together playing longer! If your family finds something to do they enjoy, not dread, they won't make excuses about getting some exercise. And remember, different people enjoy different activities. Do a variety of things to keep everyone involved – and moving!

1. **Walk the dog!** Research shows that it is healthy for both the dog and its owner to go on regular walks!
2. **Play with your kids!** Kids are hard to keep still. If you do something with your children, you will keep moving, too.
3. **Splash in a pool!** Take a dip with the kids — it is relaxing for you and good exercise for everyone.
4. **Have a ball of fun!** Maybe it's a basketball game, volleyball league or a family night of bowling. Between tossing foam balls between bats or a football game, it's a lot of fun and fitness with the kids.
5. **Make some music!** Everything is more fun with lots of music! Put on some music and get moving!
6. **Make it a 10-minute walk!** Even a little bit of activity is better than none! All it takes is 10 minutes a day, three days a week! Invite others in your family to take a short walk with you.
7. **Liven it up with laughter!** Laughing is the best of medicines! It moves all the muscles on your face, relieves tension and reduces stress!
8. **Focus on fun with your family!** A family that plays together, stays together. Give everyone a chance to pick out their favorite activity to do.
9. **Try a new exercise trend!** Don't get stuck in a rut. There are lots of things families can learn to do that are new and different. See what classes are available in your area for family fitness.
10. **Dig in your dancing shoes!** It doesn't matter if you shake, rattle, or roll, just move as you groove!
11. **Be a good neighbor!** Have members of your family volunteer to help others out by walking their dogs or helping with household chores.
12. **It's a nice day — go outside and play!** Teach your kids the joys of raking leaves and jumping in them or making a snowman. Go fly a kite or ride a bike.
13. **Take the stairs!** You get lots of extra exercise taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Teach your kids to move it on up by foot.
14. **Turn off the TV and video games!** Limit the amount of time you allow your child to be electronically entertained. Don't leave your television on continually and try to get your kids to spend as much time being physically active as they do being mentally engaged in electronics.
15. **Pick things to do that move!** Looking for some weekend entertainment? Bowling, skating or touring a museum offers more movement than watching a movie.
16. **Emphasize fun and fitness, not competition and perfection.** Not every child is going to be a great athlete. When children are made to feel inferior, they tend to withdraw from organized sports activities. Be involved in your child's activities by being active with them. Want more ideas for family fitness? Go to the Shape Up America Web site at www.shapeup.org for "99 Tips for Family Fitness Fun."