



10 Tips to Get Your Family Moving!

What's the key to get your family moving - **make it FUN!** Research has shown that the primary motivation for children/youth to participate in physical activity is to have fun (Crocker, 2011; Yarmey, 2014; Russell, 2010). That's no real surprise, as that's the same for us - as adults, we participate in activities that we find enjoyable.

It's a fact that regular **physical activity** (i.e. movement that works your muscles and requires more calories than you use when resting) helps improve our overall health and fitness, and reduces our risk for many chronic diseases. It is generally recommended that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a day or 150 minutes per week, while children should get at least 60 minutes of active play a day. Ten tips that will help you get your family moving include:

1. Set a good example: Our kids watch what we do, and often follow what we do too. As parents, we must lead by example. When our children see us being active, they are more likely to get involved and engage in activity. Children who feel supported by friends and family to become active, or are surrounded by others interested

in physical activity, are more likely to participate.

2. Turn off the TV/ computers/video games: Studies have found a direct correlation between the number of hours of TV that children watch and their risk of obesity. If we commit to limit screen time to less than two hours a day, we will automatically be more active as we won't be sitting! And when you do watch TV, make it a family rule that there's 'no sitting still during commercials'. We can add in motion, by having our children decide what physical activity everyone must do during every commercial (e.g. 10 jumping jacks, five push-ups or five sit-ups).

3. Start a family tradition - 'family activity time': Set times every week for family activity time, such

as a 15 minute to half hour family walk, or play time (e.g. double dutch jump rope, games, Frisbee throw) after supper each day. You can also build a tradition that Saturday or Sunday afternoons are the family fun/adventure times, and alternate such that each week a different family member chooses the activity (e.g. going to the beach, riding bikes, playing mini-golf). This will add variety and will get everyone involved in the activity choice and participation. You can also issue family challenges - best double-dutch jump roper, best basketball free thrower, or first family to visit every Bermuda park in 2015!

4. Give active gifts: At Christmas and on birthdays, give gifts that encourage active play such as tennis rackets, mask/snorkel/fins, kites, scooters and soccer balls. A bike makes a great gift for every family member,

as does a basketball hoop that can be placed in the driveway or a badminton set that can be setup in the back yard. This helps to reinforce the importance of physical activity and encourages and supports it as well.

5. Play in the garden: Developing and maintaining a flower or vegetable garden can be a fun and satisfying activity that involves the entire family. There is something very therapeutic about working with nature, and aside from encouraging healthier eating habits, it can provide physical benefits too. Raking and hoeing strengthens your arms and back, while digging, planting and weeding works your arms and legs.

6. Take your family game night outside: Even if you start by moving to a board game outside, you can gradually build in 10 minute breaks to kick the soccer ball, toss the frisbee or play catch. Gradually, your family's repertoire of active games will increase, and the choice will be one of these!

7. Log activities: Posting an "activity chart" on the refrigerator is a really good way for the family to set activity goals, and to see how active every member has been over the week or month. It can serve to motivate and cultivate healthy competition among family members, as well as facilitating

the offering of small rewards or surprises for meeting goals.

8. Set a family goal/team: There are so many neat community events these days that you can join in as a family. You can sign up for a charity walk or run, and then train for it together, or you set a goal of collecting so many bags of trash can get in the cleanup of your neighborhood or your favourite beach!

9. Start a chore chart and make chores a friendly challenge: Start a chore chart and assign active chores to everyone such as vacuuming, making the bed, mowing the lawn, and hanging clothes. This will serve to reinforce that chores provide physical activity too. You can make it fun by adding a challenge – who can pull the most weeds in the garden or who can collect the most litter around the neighbourhood?

10. Use technology that supports physical activity: Although I'm generally trying to get children away from the TV, on a rainy winter day I would support some of the newer action toys such as Nintendo Wii games, where the family has the ability to play tennis, bowling, baseball, skateboarding, and snowboarding, and be somewhat active. Other items such as an electronic soccer backboard which encourages shooting a soccer ball at a target, or a Dance Cam that encourages dancing are also worthwhile as they encourage and support physical activity.

So...have some fun and *get your family moving!*

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