

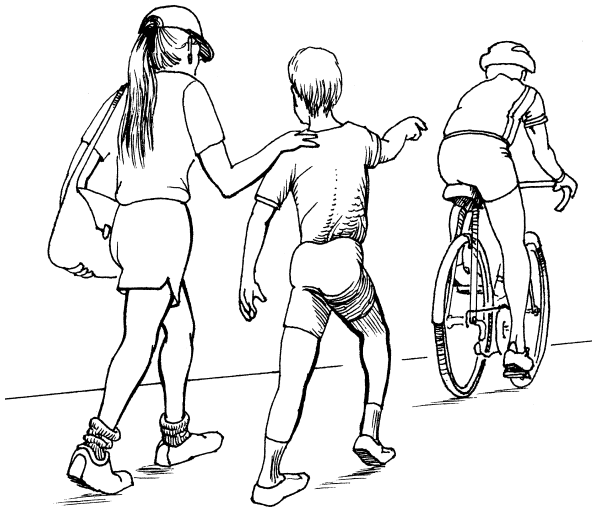


Get Fit With Your Kids

Parents and kids alike need regular aerobic exercise to stay healthy. Mix weekly exercise activities with your kids and you have a recipe for health-enhancing fun that strengthens family ties.

Adults need at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week to stay healthy and combat stress. Kids' capacities for aerobic activity vary according to age, although many youngsters have enough energy to run circles around their parents. When you plan family fitness outings with your kids, choose activities that match their aerobic capacities, coordination and skill levels. Always keep safety considerations in mind.

Here are some exercises you can do with your kids. For all outdoor activities, wear hats with visors, sunscreen and sunglasses with straps.



Walking

A walk around town, through the woods, in the mountains or on the beach is a great way for kids and their parents to stretch their muscles, burn calories and discover new sights together. For city treks, pack snacks and beverages in your backpacks. On hikes, add binoculars, nature books, compasses, maps and insect repellent. Be sure to wear sturdy, comfortable shoes for your expeditions. Try strapping your little ones into three-wheeled strollers meant for jogging.

Cycling

Even toddlers on tricycles and youngsters on bikes with training wheels can participate in family rides around town and on back roads. Make sure everyone's cycle is the correct size for their height. Bring water bottles, high-energy snacks and fruit. Wear approved helmets, use bicycle safety flags and carry a repair kit with patches, tubes, wrenches and an air pump.

Wheels and Blades

Roller and ice skating are activities adults and children can enjoy together. Many cities have special areas meant just for skaters. Knee and elbow pads will help cushion the blow if skin meets the pavement. Wrist guards can help prevent injuries from falls.

Swimming

Water sports are great opportunities for family fun, but extra safety precautions are required. Never leave young children unattended in or near a pool, lake, river or any body of water. Younger children should always wear certified life preservers. Avoid inner tubes and "water wings." They don't provide adequate protection for young children. Adults who swim with their children should learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and other water safety procedures.

Dancing

Most adults don't consider dancing an activity to do with their kids. But some forms of social dancing, including folk dancing and square dancing, are easy and fun for kids to learn. Investigate dancing opportunities at schools and community centers. Ask if children are invited to attend.

Parties and Other Activities

Birthday parties at bowling alleys, skating rinks, miniature golf courses or parks are good ways to add physical activity to family gatherings. Think like a kid and you'll come up with other great ideas for family fitness. Kite flying, dog walking, skiing, treasure hunts, batting cages and walk-a-thons are just a few more ways you can mix fitness with family fun.