



10 Tips for Becoming More Active as a Family

Physical activity is important for children and adults of all ages. Being active as a family can benefit everyone. Adults need 2½ hours a week of physical activity, and children need 60 minutes a day. Follow these tips to add more activity to your family's busy schedule.

- **Set specific activity times.** Determine time slots throughout the week when the whole family is available. Devote a few of these times to physical activity. Try doing something active after dinner or begin the weekend with a Saturday morning walk.
- **Plan ahead and track your progress.** Write your activity plans on a family calendar. Let the kids help in planning the activities. Allow them to check it off after completing each activity.
- **Include work around the house.** Involve the kids in yard work and other active chores around the house. Have them help you with raking, weeding, planting, or vacuuming.
- **Use what is available.** Plan activities that require little or no equipment or facilities. Examples include walking, jogging, jumping rope, playing tag, and dancing. Find out what programs your community recreation center offers for free or a minimal charge.
- **Build new skills.** Enroll the kids in classes they might enjoy such as gymnastics, dance, or tennis. Help them practice. This will keep things fun and interesting, and introduce new skills!
- **Plan for all weather conditions.** Choose some activities that do not depend on the weather conditions. Try mall walking, indoor swimming, or active video games. Enjoy outdoor activities as a bonus whenever the weather is nice.
- **Turn off the TV.** Set a rule that no one can spend longer than 2 hours per day playing video games, watching TV, and using the computer (except for school work). Instead of a TV show, play an active family game, dance to favorite music, or go for a walk.
- **Start small.** Begin by introducing one new family activity and add more when you feel everyone is ready. Take the dog for a longer walk, play another ball game, or go to an additional exercise class.
- **Include other families.** Invite others to join your family activities. This is a great way for you and your kids to spend time with friends while being physically active. Plan parties with active games such as bowling or an obstacle course, sign up for family programs at the YMCA, or join a recreational club.
- **Treat the family with fun physical activity.** When it is time to celebrate as a family, do something active as a reward. Plan a trip to the zoo, park, or lake to treat the family.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). (2015, September). *10 tips nutrition education series: Be an active family—10 tips for becoming more active as a family* (DG Tipsheet No. 29). Retrieved June 2, 2016, from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

www.commonhealth.virginia.gov

The contents of the CommonHealth weekly emails may be reprinted from an outside resource in the area of health, safety, and wellness and is intended to provide one or more views on a topic. These views do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Virginia, CommonHealth, or any particular agency and are offered for educational purposes. If you have questions or concerns about this article, please email us at wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov