

Encouraging Your Child to Be Active

Children need at least 60 minutes of active play every day. Physically active children are healthier, happier, and better able to succeed in school. Your children depend on you to give them every chance to be active.

Turn off the TV!

- Children who watch too much television are more likely to be inactive and overweight. They do not spend as much time running, jumping, and getting the exercise they need. They also see many commercials for unhealthy foods, such as candy and sugary cereals. For this and other reasons, ***the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends only 1-2 hours of TV a day for children***, and no TV at all for kids under age 2.
- Give children something else to do besides watch TV—see pages 50-54 for clubs, sports teams, or summer activities for your child.

Walk!

- Make walking a family custom. Take daily walks. Even young toddlers should get out and be on their feet as much as possible. Take a stroller for the little ones, but give them a chance to walk at least part of the way.
- Go someplace fun! Walk with your children to a friend's house, park or playground. For a change of scenery, find a new playground or park in another neighborhood. Walk to the local library for children's story hours. Walk to a Farmers Market. See pages 21-37 for locations of playgrounds, parks and other fun walking destinations.

Play!

- If you have a backyard, play family games of tag, hide-and-go-seek, badminton, tetherball, or volleyball. Let the kids know that games are about having fun, not about winning.
- Give your children toys that encourage physical activity, such as balls, jump ropes, sidewalk chalk, kites, hula hoops, foot bags, tricycles, bikes, dance CDs, scooters, skates, and Frisbees.
- Celebrate with physical activity. For birthdays and other celebrations, do something physically active instead of the usual ice cream or fast-food outing. Go apple-picking, swimming, canoeing, fishing, bowling, hiking, or horseback riding. See pages 55-60 for "Active Family Outings."
- Be a role model to your children. If you enjoy physical activity, they will too.