

Make Physical Activity and Exercise Fun for the Family

Knowing the amount of physical activity recommended for a healthy lifestyle can help your family reach important goals for fitness and overall health. Below are specifics on important terms to know, weekly physical activity recommendations for kids and adults, and workout combinations to help get your family there!

Physical activity and exercise

Making physical activity and exercise a part of everyday life can help you and your family members meet healthy living goals.

Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires the body to use energy (calories). Leisure walking and biking, household chores, and occupational activities are all examples of physical activities.

A subcategory of physical activity, **exercise** is any planned, repetitive and purposeful activity that focuses on enhancing health and fitness. Examples of exercise activities include: moderate/vigorous walking, running, biking or swimming laps; recreational sports such as soccer, basketball and field hockey; exercise classes such as Zumba, water aerobics, yoga or kickboxing; and resistance training.*

Most exercise and physical activities are considered **moderate** or **vigorous** intensity. It's really dependent on how much effort you put behind it. You can go on a bike ride through your neighborhood, which may be moderate activity, or you could go on a ride where you have steep hills and rough terrain and have to give everything you have which would be vigorous intensity.

In general, moderate intensity activities require a moderate amount of effort and cause a noticeable increase in heart rate and vigorous intensity activities require a large amount of effort and cause a substantial increase in heart rate and rapid breathing.

Physical activity recommendations

For adults, the Surgeon General of the United States recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity cardiorespiratory activity every week OR 115 minutes of vigorous-intensity cardiorespiratory activity every week AND muscle strengthening activities on two or more days each week.

For children, the Surgeon General recommends at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Three of these days should include vigorous-intensity cardiorespiratory activity and three of these days should include muscle strengthening activities.

Cardiorespiratory activity is any type of continual, rhythmic activity that works large groups of muscles and makes your heart and lungs work harder causing them to get stronger over time. Your heart is the most important muscle because it pumps oxygen through your blood vessels to all the other muscles in your body (like your arms and legs) so they can work properly.

The term **muscle strengthening** refers to any type of activity where our goal is to INCREASE our strength — whether it be with heavier weight or by doing higher repetitions. Muscle strengthening activities typically include bodyweight exercises such as pull-ups, push-ups, squats and dips, as well as activities with dumbbells or barbells, body bars, medicine balls or stationary weight equipment at the gym.

TIPS FOR STAYING ACTIVE

The Buddy System

Find a “workout buddy” or “workout group” who can help with motivation and accountability for you and your child. You can hold each other accountable too! If you set certain times, days or nights of the week for physical activity, it makes it easier to motivate each other to stick to the schedule. You’re also both less likely to come up with excuses not to go since the other person is relying on you!

* Resistance training is any exercise that causes the muscles to contract against an external resistance. This external resistance could be dumbbells, resistance bands, your body weight, a milk jug or any other object that causes your muscles to contract. This type of physical activity can help increase muscle mass, strength, tone and endurance and is key to keeping healthy muscles and bones as you age.



Break it up

Keep in mind that you can break your physical activity into 10-15 minute bouts if time is a common barrier.

Schedule fitness

Set time for physical activity on the family calendar.

Find your favorite fitness app

Try one or all of these physical activity apps: MyFitnessPal, Nike Training Club, MapMyFitness, Moves, Tabata and Fitness Buddy.

Visit our blog, advancingchildrenshealth.com, for more tips on staying active and to enter to win our “active family” contest.