

# Get Your Family Moving!

## **What can parents do to promote family fitness?**

Make a conscious effort to do family activities together. When the kids play, join them. There are outdoor activities such as baseball, football, in-line skating and biking that you can do together. You can also include indoor activities such as dancing or playing games with soft, Nerf-type balls.

- Keep activities and games fun rather than competitive so kids aren't pressured to excel.
- Remember that you're encouraging children to be active for a lifetime, not just a day.
- Consciously try to keep your children– and yourself– moving. Young children naturally enjoy moving and being active. But as they get older, they “lose this activity.” They're more apt to sit for longer periods of time to watch TV, read books or just hang out with friends. It takes energy from parents to keep them moving! Get yourself moving, and they'll move too!

## **Is it important for parents to be active if they want their children to be active?**

Active parents want their children to be active too! If you're an active parent, you'll automatically look for ways to involve your children in activities. There is an important transfer between parents and kids. Active parents can also be role models by getting their kids to enjoy activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing or swimming at the beach. If kids learn to like “lifetime” activities, they'll always have something to fall back on, as opposed to just learning organized sports. Many times, once children leave high school they have a hard time finding ways to be active because they only played organized sports. Children also need to learn activities they enjoy that don't require a whole team.

## **Where does healthy eating fit into the fitness formula?**

When you eat well– making sure your meals include breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack in addition to dinner– you have more energy to enjoy being active. Healthy eating can be thought of as “fueling.” Parents and children need to think about food as fuel. You have a car, you put gas in it, and you go. You have a body, you put food in it, and you go. Food is not something that is optional, that you don't have time for or that should be viewed as fattening.

## **How important is physical activity in helping children maintain a healthy weight?**

We know the more time that kids spend in front of the TV, computer or video games, the more time they spend being inactive. If they are out riding bikes or playing basketball, they are using energy. However, more children today are overweight than ever before. It's largely because kids are not playing the way they once did.

## **How can we keep children active in the winter when days are shorter and the weather may be cold?**

It requires thinking creatively and using the space you have available. A lot depends on what your children's interests are. It could be dancing, playing with foam balls or playing follow the leader. The other alternative is to dress warmly, and send them outside. It's fun to be outdoors in the winter as long as you're dressed warmly– especially in the snow!