

Parent Communications— Keep Moving!

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Keep Moving! Feel Great!

Feeling exhausted at the end of the day? How about the kids . . . do they just want to flop in front of the TV? Physical activity can get everyone feeling better.

Daily physical activity can help you reduce stress, feel more energetic, and have greater concentration. It also helps you maintain a healthy weight and protects you from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and osteoporosis (weak bones). Studies show that regular physical activity even helps children do better in school.

How much activity do children need? Children need to be active in play for at least an hour per day, spread out in bouts of 10 to 15 minutes at a time. For children over 12 years, physical activity should include 20 minutes of vigorous activity at least 3 times per week. This includes activities that make children breathe hard and sweat.

Try the following tips for keeping your family active:

- ▶ Set up a routine of regular physical activity for yourself, even if it's a simple walk after dinner.
- ▶ Limit TV time in the house—for everyone—to 1 to 2 hours, maximum
- ▶ Enjoy active time together as a family at least once during weekends.
- ▶ Make sure that your children have opportunities for active play after school on most days of the week. This can be in your yard, at a playground, or in sports and recreation programs.
- ▶ If your children go to after-school child care, find out what types of physical activity are offered and whether your child participates.

Children who grow up in an active family are more likely to remain active as adults. As a parent, you set the attitudes toward physical activity and other lifestyle choices. Set a good example by keeping yourself active and by encouraging your children to find activities they enjoy. For more ideas on how to activate your family, check out www.verbnow.com and www.bam.gov.

From L.W.Y. Cheung, H. Dart, S. Kalin, and S.L. Gortmaker, 2007, *Eat Well & Keep Moving*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics). Adapted, by permission, from *Food & Fun After School Parent Communications*. ©2006 President and Fellows of Harvard College.

(continued)

Optional table:

► FUN WAYS TO STAY ACTIVE

Examples of moderate activity	Examples of vigorous activity
Games: hopscotch, four square, dodgeball, capture the flag, playground play	Games: running and chasing games (tag), jumping rope
Sports: soccer, baseball, bowling	Sports: basketball, soccer, jogging, lap swimming, cross-country skiing, cycling
Recreation: dancing, walking, bike riding	Recreation: aerobic dancing, mountain hiking

Optional e-mail message: Use this sample message to communicate with parents by e-mail (if available).

Subject Line: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Get Moving!

Dear (school name and grade) Parents,

This week the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program (your school name and grade) will focus on the importance of being physically active every day for at least an hour per day. Students will be instructed in the five steps of the safe workout: warm-up, stretch, fitness activity, cool-down, and cool-down stretch. Our key messages are the following:

- Moving your body feels good.
- Any type of physical activity helps you to be strong and fit.

Our goal is to engage children in regular physical activity and to do so in a manner that encourages all children, regardless of their abilities. You can encourage regular physical activity at home by reinforcing the key messages and by following these Healthy Habits Power Tips:

- Be a good role model by participating in regular physical activity yourself.
- Provide opportunities for your children to be physically active every day.
- Make physical activity a fun way for your family to be together. Try to plan at least one fun physical activity together on weekends. You can walk, ride bikes, play basketball—it's up to you.
- Limit screen time (TV, computer, video games) to a maximum of 2 hours per day. Be prepared to suggest activities that your children can do instead.

Want to learn more? Parents and kids aged 9 to 13 can click on www.bam.gov or www.verbnow.com (both from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) for ideas on games and activities.

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