

Ideas to keep your child exercising...

1. Keep the focus on fun: your child won't do something they don't enjoy

- Try to give a positive attitude about exercising
- Make the exercises part of a game (or sing songs, listen to a CD anything to inspire your child!)
- Reward your child for exercising – a star chart for younger children or a reward programme for older ones (allow them to watch a certain TV programme or collect points for a prize of their choice etc)
- Plan active family activities, such as a family hiking or biking trip so the child isn't exercising alone and it increases the amount of quality time spent together.

2. Make sure the activities are suitable for your child's age – if they're not, your child might get bored or frustrated.

- *Preschoolers* need play exercises that help them develop their motor skills eg, playing chase or Simon Says, hopping, climbing and dancing, riding a bike and kicking and throwing a ball.
- *Primary school-age* children will increasingly spend more time on computers and watching TV, so the challenge is to help them find physical activities they enjoy. Commitment and interest level often go hand in hand with ability, which is why it's important to find an activity that your child feels they can succeed at. These could range from formal sports like rugby and badminton to dancing, scouts, hiking, and other active pursuits. Their timetable will start to get busy over this period so don't forget to leave time for un-regimented play too.
- *Teenagers* have a wide choice of activities from school sports to extra curricular interests, such as yoga or skateboarding. This group might also need help scheduling physical activity into their calendars alongside their other responsibilities and commitments. They might also need support with transport and equipment and remember the importance of exercise clothing – it could help a self-conscious teenager feel confident enough to go to the gym or out on their bike.

3. Fit activities to your child's character:

Our attitude toward participation in physical activities is shaped by our personality and athletic abilities. Some children will want to pursue excellence in a sport, while others may be happy just being casual participants.

The competitor, for example, will strive to be on the football team, while the informal athlete may just enjoy kicking a ball around at break time. However, the non-athlete will need parental help and encouragement to become (and stay) physically active. Building fitness activities into the last group's routine is especially important, eg, cycling to school 3 times/week.

Whatever your child's character, remember that all children can be physically fit.

4. Be active yourself and support your child's interests

It has been shown that parents who demonstrate enjoyment of their own physical activity convey a message that physical activity is important.