

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute!

Make Fitness a Family Affair

One in three American children is obese or overweight. Excess weight has a negative impact on almost every organ system in the body. High blood pressure and early stages of heart disease, for example, have been observed in overweight children as young as three years old.

If you think your family's fitness strategy could use some improvement, you should first consult your pediatrician, who can also tell you what your child's ideal weight should be. If the weight problem isn't medical and your child is 20 pounds or less over his or her ideal weight, you may be able to manage weight problems with some behavioral, physical and nutritional changes.

Cut the fat

To improve your family's diet, here's what a few nutritionists recommend:

- Eat meals together as a family so you can control how much and what your kids eat.
- Shop wisely; if you don't want your child to eat it, don't bring it in the house.
- Plan regular meals. If children get too hungry, they may overeat.

Move your feet

It's actually fairly easy to incorporate physical activity with children, since they love to play and be active.

- The easiest activity is walking. Parks with walking paths, the beach or the zoo are all good choices. Or just walk around the block or the mall.



- Older children and adolescents may be more interested in team sports or a more individualized activity such as walking or swimming.
- Join a family-oriented fitness club. Many clubs recognize the value of family fitness and offer some type of program.

For all of these suggestions, one theme dominates: parental involvement. Without you making changes, it will be difficult for things to change for the family. Get the family moving today – you'll all enjoy the benefits. ■

Fitness can be fun

You're explaining the value of family fitness to your kids, but all they hear is "blah, blah, blah, eat your broccoli," or "blah, blah, blah, turn off the TV." Need a few ideas to get them motivated?

Eat a rainbow. Fruits and veggies come in all shapes, sizes – and colors! Challenge your kids to pick five favorite colors, then find the fruits and vegetables that match that color.

Make a snack plan. Ask your kids to create a week of healthy snack ideas, picking foods from these food groups: breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy. Post the seven ideas on your refrigerator.

You're on! Challenge the family to get at least 30 minutes of activity every day. Create a chart, including "prizes" to award the winners – a pass on washing the dishes or choosing the next family movie.



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