

Teen Education and Enrichment Programs

MCCA Team Fitness Program & Coaches Manual

Team Fitness Wellness Classes



“BUILDING FUTURE LEADERS”

MINORITY CHRISTIAN COACHES ASSOCIATION

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MCCA
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Ministry

Team Fitness Training Manual

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General Principles of Fitness Training

How Much Exercise Do Kids Need?

Everyone knows that kids should be physically active and need to exercise regularly to be physically fit.

Whether they are overweight or at a healthy weight, regular physical activity is considered by most experts to be an essential part of a healthy lifestyle.

That doesn't mean that every child needs to spend four or five hours a day training for the Olympics or practicing with a select baseball or soccer team. Participating in organized youth sports isn't a requirement for physical activity, as kids can get plenty of exercise during active free play.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children and teens should be "physically active for at least 60 minutes per day," although they stress that it doesn't have to be 60 minutes of continuous activity. For example, if your eight-year-old played soccer for 20 minutes during PE at school and then played basketball with his friends for 40 minutes after school, he would meet the AAP's recommendation of 60 minutes of physical activity for that day.

On the other hand, if during a 60-minute PE class at school the class spends 30 minutes getting dressed, choosing teams, and lining up to play, and your child then watches TV and plays video games after school, he would not be active enough that day.

Exercise and Calories

Regular exercise is good for kids. It has been shown to help them build strong self-esteem, sleep better, have more energy, decrease anxiety, and decrease depression. And as most people know, along with a healthy diet, regular exercise is the best way to lose weight and prevent childhood obesity.

Since your child likely isn't going to be getting his exercise by running on a treadmill or using an exercise bike, it can be hard to always tell how many calories he is burning while exercising. Fortunately, it doesn't really matter, as long as your child is getting his 60 minutes or more of moderate physical activity each day and maintaining a healthy diet.

If your child is very active and is still gaining weight, you should likely look to his diet as the cause -- not his level of exercise.

Still, it can be helpful to understand how your child can burn more or fewer calories in different physical activities, such as:

- **bicycling** at 5 mph burns about 174 calories an hour
- **jogging** at 6 mph burns about 654 calories an hour
- playing recreational **basketball** burns about 450 calories an hour
- playing recreational **volleyball** burns about 274 calories an hour
- playing **tennis** (singles) burns about 450 calories an hour
- playing vigorous, touch **football** burns about 498 calories an hour
- **roller skating** at 9 mph burns about 384 calories an hour
- **swimming** burns about 288 calories an hour
- **walking** at 2 mph burns about 198 calories an hour

Keep in mind that these are estimates based on a person weighing 150 pounds. A child weighing less will burn fewer calories, even at the same level of activity. Also realize that a child riding his bike for an hour around the neighborhood with his friends is likely not going to keep up a 5 mph average speed, so he will likely burn even fewer calories. You can, however, use the above list to estimate how many calories your child burns and as a guide to which activities burn more calories.

Youth Exercise and Fitness

Remember that kids, even teens, don't usually stick with exercise programs that involve "calisthenics or programmed aerobic exercise." That is why you don't see many kids in health clubs or using home exercise equipment (never mind that many gyms and pieces of equipment are not designed for use by children). Instead, kids do better with lifestyle exercise programs, including active free play and organized team and individual youth sports.

To get kids more active and more interested in exercise and fitness, it can help to:

- Get the whole family involved in being more active, keeping in mind that most kids would rather be outside playing, instead of watching another "Sponge Bob" repeat -- they just don't want to be outside by themselves. If you go outside with your child to play catch, tag, or simply go for a walk, you can usually be sure that your child will be quick to follow.

- Have your kids use "active transportation" in which they have to use stairs, instead of elevators, and walk to school or to their friend's house, instead of always being driven.
- Encourage more unorganized outdoor free play.
- Support personal fitness and fun recreational activities.
- Help your child find an organized sport that he likes. This could be a team sport, such as baseball, soccer, or football, or an individual sport, such as tennis, karate, or dance.
- Encourage kids to play "active" video games, when they are using up their two hours of screen time, such as Dance Dance Revolution, Wii Sports and Wii Fit.

The Many Benefits of Exercise

Everyone can benefit from regular exercise. Kids who are active will:

- have stronger muscles and bones
- have a leaner body because exercise helps control body fat
- be less likely to become overweight
- decrease the risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- possibly lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels
- have a better outlook on life

In addition to the health benefits of regular exercise, kids who are physically fit sleep better and are better able to handle the physical and emotional challenges that a typical day presents — be that running to catch a bus, bending down to tie a shoe, or studying for a test.

The Three Elements of Fitness

If you've ever watched kids on a playground, you've seen the three elements of fitness in action when they:

1. run away from the kid who's "it" (**endurance**)
2. cross the monkey bars (**strength**)
3. bend down to tie their shoes (**flexibility**)

Parents should encourage their kids to do a variety of activities so that they can work on all three elements.

Endurance is developed when kids regularly engage in aerobic activity. During aerobic exercise, the heart beats faster and a person breathes harder. When done regularly and for continuous periods of time, aerobic activity strengthens the heart and improves the body's ability to deliver oxygen to all its cells.

Aerobic exercise can be fun for both adults *and* kids. Examples of aerobic activities include:

- basketball
- soccer
- jogging
- bicycling
- swimming
- running
- ice-skating
- tennis
- in-line skating
- walking

Improving strength doesn't have to mean lifting weights. Although some kids benefit from lifting weights, it should be done under the supervision of an experienced adult who works with them. But most kids don't need a formal weight-training program to be strong. Push-ups, stomach crunches, pull-ups, and other exercises help tone and strengthen muscles. Kids also incorporate strength activities in their play when they climb, do a handstand, or wrestle.

Stretching exercises help improve flexibility, allowing muscles and joints to bend and move easily through their full range of motion. Kids look for opportunities every day to stretch when they try to get a toy just out of reach, practice a split, or flip over the couch.

The Sedentary Problem

The percentage of overweight kids has more than doubled over the past 30 years. Although many factors contribute to this epidemic, kids are becoming more sedentary. In other words, they're sitting around a lot more than they used to.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the average child is watching about 3 hours of television a day. And the average kid spends 5½ hours on all media combined, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Young kids should **not** be inactive for prolonged periods of time — no more than 1 hour unless they're sleeping. And school-age children should **not** be inactive for periods longer than 2 hours.

One of the best ways to get kids to be more active is to limit the amount of time spent in sedentary activities, especially watching TV or playing video games. The AAP recommends that children under the age of 2 years watch no TV at all and that screen time should be limited to no more than 1 to 2 hours of *quality programming* a day for kids 2 years and older.

How Much Exercise Is Enough?

Parents need to ensure that their kids get enough exercise. So, how much is enough? According to the 2005 dietary guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), **all** children 2 years and older should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most, preferably all, days of the week. In addition to providing more practical advice on providing a healthy, balanced diet, the new dietary guidelines also suggest that kids eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Here are the current activity recommendations for kids, according to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE):

Age	Minimum Daily Activity	Comments
Infant	No specific requirements	Physical activity should encourage motor development
Toddler	1½ hours	30 minutes planned physical activity AND 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
Preschooler	2 hours	60 minutes planned physical activity AND 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
School age	1 hour or more	Break up into bouts of 15 minutes or more

Also, the USDA's website for the revised [Food Guide Pyramid](#) lets parents enter a child's age, gender, and activity level to get recommendations for total calories and healthy eating.

Raising a Fit Kid

Combining regular physical activity with a healthy diet is the key to a healthy lifestyle.

Here are some tips for raising fit kids:

- Help your child participate in a variety of activities that are age-appropriate.
- Establish a regular schedule for physical activity.
- Incorporate activity into daily routines, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Embrace a healthier lifestyle yourself, so you'll be a positive role model for your family.
- Keep it fun, so you can count on your child to come back for more.

Teaching Effective Exercise

Unlike adults, most kids are not interested in organized or supervised exercise programs. Children prefer activities that are typically considered free play. If you plan to set a regular exercise program for children understand that they do require education and motivation to participate in a regular routine.

Here are a few tips on teaching and motivating children to exercise:

1. **Clear Training Objectives:** If you are organizing a regular routine workout with children, set clear training objectives in a simple to understand manner.
2. **Use concise instruction with precise demonstration:** Show and tell is a simple but effective way to communicate the information.
3. **Attentive Supervision:** Many children lack confidence in their exercise abilities and appreciate adult supervision and encouragement. A qualified instructor can provide great motivation for young exercisers.
4. **Appropriate Assistance:** Strength training is often difficult for young exercisers. Provide a little manual assistance to guide them to a successful exercise experience.
5. **One Task at a Time:** Give children only one task at a time to ensure they do not become confused. This increases the probability they will progress successfully through the exercise session.
6. **Gradual Progression:** Take small steps with young exercisers. Do not introduce a new task until the first one is mastered. Better to have young exercisers learn the correct way to exercise than to un-learn the wrong way.
7. **Positive Reinforcement:** Increase a child's self-confidence and satisfaction with exercise by giving them encouraging comments, personal compliments or a pat on the shoulder. Telling children they are doing a good job is one of the best ways to keep them doing a good job.
8. **Specific Feedback:** Positive reinforcement is much more meaningful when delivered with specific feedback. Giving a reason for your comment increases the value of the statement.
9. **Careful Questioning:** Children may be reluctant to give information that could be useful in selecting the right exercises. Try to ask questions that require more than a yes and no answer.
10. **Pre- and Post-Exercise Dialogue:** Spend some time before and after an exercise session in an enthusiastic conversation with the children. It will give you insight into what makes them tick.

Kids 2 to 3 Fitness

Kids this age are learning to master basic movements like walking, running, kicking, and throwing. They're naturally active, so be sure to provide lots of opportunities for your child to practice and build on these skills.

How much is enough? According to the National Association of Sports and Physical Education, each day toddlers should:

- get at least 30 minutes of structured physical activity (adult-led)
- get at least 60 minutes unstructured physical activity (free play)
- not be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time (except for sleeping)

What Kids Can Do

It's important to understand what kids can do and what skills are appropriate for this age. By age 2, toddlers should be able to walk, run, and jump in place with both feet. By age 3, most kids can run and jump well. In addition, they'll learn to balance briefly on one foot, climb well, kick the ball forward, throw the ball overhand, and pedal a tricycle.

Keep these skills in mind when encouraging your child to be active. Play games together and provide age-appropriate active toys, such as balls, push and pull toys, and riding vehicles.

Mommy-and-me programs can introduce toddlers to tumbling, dance, and general movement. But you don't have to enroll kids in a formal program to foster these skills. The most important thing is to provide lots of opportunities to be active in a safe environment.

Family Fitness Tips

Kids who like to engage in active play now are likely to stay active and be physically fit in the future. Walking, playing, exploring your backyard or using playground equipment at a local park can be fun for the entire family.

Also, these games provide fun and fitness for parents and toddlers:

- Walk like a penguin, hop like a frog, or imitate other animals' movements.
- Sit facing each other and hold hands. Rock back and forth and sing the song "Row, row, row your boat."

- Bend at the waist and touch the ground. Walk your hands forward and inch along like a caterpillar.
- Sit on the ground and let your child step over your legs, or make a bridge with your body and let your child crawl under.
- Play follow the leader, "Ring around the rosy," and other similar games.
- Listen to music and dance together.

The possibilities are endless — come up with your own active ideas or follow your child's lead. Also, limit the amount of time your child spends watching TV (including DVDs and videos) or playing on a computer.

When to Call the Doctor

If your toddler refuses to play or interact with other kids, or complains of pain during or after play, talk with your doctor.

Kids who are active at young age tend to stay active throughout their lives. And staying fit can improve self-esteem, help maintain a healthy weight, and decrease the risk of serious illnesses, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD

Date reviewed: August 2008

Kids 4 to 5 Fitness

By the time they're 4 and 5 years old, kids have mastered basic movement skills like running and jumping, and have plenty of energy to put them to good use.

Now they'll continue to refine these skills and build on them to learn more complex ones.

Take advantage of your child's natural tendency to be active. Staying fit can help improve kids' self-esteem and decrease the risk of serious illnesses later in life.

Fitness for Preschoolers

The National Association of Sports and Physical Education recommends that every day preschoolers should:

- get at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity (adult-led activity)
- get at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity (free play)
- not be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time (unless sleeping)

It's important to understand what preschoolers can handle. They should participate in fun and challenging activities that help build skills and coordination but aren't beyond their abilities.

Kids this age are learning to hop, skip, and jump forward, and are eager to show off how they can balance on one foot (for 5 seconds or longer), catch a ball, or do a somersault. Preschoolers might also enjoy swimming, hiking, dancing, and riding a tricycle or bicycle with training wheels.

Many parents look to organized sports to get preschoolers active. But the average 4- or 5-year-old has not mastered even the basics, such as throwing, catching, and taking turns. Even simple rules may be hard for them to understand, as any parent who has watched their child run the wrong way during a game knows.

And starting too young can be frustrating for kids and may discourage future participation in sports. So if you decide to sign your preschooler up for soccer or another team sport, be sure to choose a peewee league that emphasizes the fundamentals.

No matter what the sport or activity, remember that fitness should be fun. If your child isn't having fun, ask why and try to address the issue or find another activity.

Family Fitness Tips

Walking, playing, running in the backyard or using playground equipment at a local park can be fun for the entire family.

Other activities to try together, or for a group of preschoolers to enjoy, include:

- playing games such as "Duck, Duck, Goose" or "Follow the Leader," then mixing it up with jumping, hopping, and walking backward
- kicking a ball back and forth
- hitting a ball off a T-ball stand
- playing freeze dance or freeze tag
- pretending to be statues to practice balancing

Kids can be active even when they're stuck indoors. Designate a safe play area and try some active inside games:

- Treasure hunt: Hide "treasures" throughout the house and provide clues to their locations.
- Obstacle course: Set up an obstacle course with chairs, boxes, and toys for the kids to go over, under, through, and around.
- Soft-ball games: Use soft foam balls to play indoor basketball, bowling, soccer, or catch. You can even use balloons to play volleyball or catch.

When to Call the Doctor

If your child refuses to play or join other kids in sports or complains of pain after being active, talk with your doctor.

Kids who enjoy sports and exercise tend to stay active throughout their lives. And staying fit can improve self-esteem, help a person maintain a healthy weight, and decrease the risk of serious illnesses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease later in life.

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Kids 6 to 12 Fitness

Kids this age need physical activity to build strength, coordination, confidence, and to lay the groundwork for a healthy lifestyle. They're also gaining more control over how active they are.

School-age kids should have many opportunities to participate in a variety of activities, sports, and games that fit for their personality, ability, age, and interests. Brainstorm with your kids on activities that feel right. Most kids won't mind a daily dose of fitness as long as it's fun.

The National Association for Sports and Physical Education recommends that school-age kids:

- get 1 hour or more of moderate and vigorous physical activity on most or all days
- also participate in several bouts of physical activity of 15 minutes or more each day
- avoid periods of inactivity of 2 hours or more

Fitness at Home

Many parents and kids think of organized sports when they think of fitness. Though there are many advantages to signing a child up for the softball team, practice and games once or twice a week will not be enough to reach activity goals. In addition, parents can no longer rely on physical education in the schools to provide enough physical activity for kids.

Here are some ways to keep your kids moving at home:

- Incorporate physical activity into the daily routine. From household chores to an after-dinner walk, keep your family active every day.
- Allow enough time for free play. Kids can burn more calories and have more fun when left to their own devices. Playing tag, riding bikes around the neighborhood, and building snowmen are fun and healthy.
- Keep a variety of games and sports equipment on hand. It doesn't have to be expensive — an assortment of balls, hula-hoops, and jump ropes can keep kids busy for hours.

- Be active together. It'll get you moving and kids love to play with their parents.
- Limit time spent in sedentary activities, such as watching TV, going online, and playing video games.

When you have exhausted the possibilities at home, take advantage of local playgrounds and athletic fields. Make family fitness outings part of your regular routine. Let family members choose an activity — go hiking, ice skating, or try out the rock-climbing gym. Anything goes, as long as everyone can participate.

You can help show your kids that exercise is important by regularly exercising yourself.

Fitness for Kids

Through physical activities, kids can learn about setting goals, meeting challenges, sportsmanship, teamwork, and the value of practice.

Keep in mind your child's age and developmental level, natural abilities, and interests. Between the ages of 6 and 8, kids are sharpening basic physical skills like jumping, throwing, kicking, and catching. Some kids enjoy doing this in organized sports teams, but non-competitive leagues are best for younger kids. Show your support by coaching your child's team or cheering from the stands on game days.

Kids who are 9 to 12 years old are refining, improving, and coordinating skills. Some become even more committed to a sport while others drop out as competition heats up and level of play improves.

It's OK if a child isn't interested in traditional sports, but it's important to find alternative ways to be active. Encourage a child who doesn't like soccer, basketball, or other team sports to explore other active options, like karate, fencing, golf, bicycling, skateboarding, and tennis.

Preventing Problems

Kids who participate in sports are at risk for injuries, so be sure yours wear the appropriate protective equipment, such as a helmet and protective pads when roller-blading. Kids who specialize in one sport are also at risk of overuse injuries, including stress fractures and joint injuries.

A child with a chronic health condition or disability should not be excluded from fitness activities. Some activities may need to be modified or adapted, and some may be too risky depending on the condition. Consult your doctor about which activities are safe for your child.

Kids who enjoy sports and exercise tend to stay active throughout their lives. And staying fit can help improve self-esteem, maintain a healthy weight, and decrease the risk of serious illnesses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

If your child refuses to play or interact with peers, or complains of pain during activity, talk with your doctor.

Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD

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Kids 13 to 18 Fitness

Kids who enjoy sports and exercise tend to stay active throughout their lives.

Immediate benefits include maintaining a healthy weight, feeling more energetic, and promoting a better outlook. Participating in team and individual sports can boost self-confidence, provide opportunities for social interaction, and offer a chance to have fun. And regular physical activity now can help prevent heart disease, diabetes, and other medical problems later in life.

Fitness in the Teen Years

It's recommended that teens get at least 1 hour of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. Yet physical activity tends to decline during the teen years. Many teens drop out of organized sports and participation in daily physical education classes is a thing of the past.

But given the opportunity and interest, teens can reap health benefits from almost any activity they enjoy, from skateboarding, in-line skating, yoga, swimming, dancing, or kicking a footbag in the driveway. Weight training, under supervision of a qualified adult, can improve strength and help prevent sports injuries.

Teens can work physical activity into everyday routines, such as walking to school, doing chores, or finding an active part-time job. They can take be camp counselors, babysitters, or assistant coaches for young sports teams, jobs that come with a chance to be active.

Motivating Teens to Be Active

Teens face many new social and academic pressures in addition to dealing with emotional and physical changes. Studies show that teens on average spend more than 6 hours a day on various media, including watching TV, listening to music, surfing online, and playing video games. It's not surprising that teens can't seem to find the time to exercise and many parents can't motivate them to be active.

Parents should try to give teens control over how they decide to be physically active. Teens are defining themselves as individuals and want the power to make their own decisions, so they're reluctant to do yet another thing they're told to do. Emphasize that it's not *what* they do; they just need to be physically active regularly.

Once they get started, many teens enjoy the feeling of well-being, reduced stress, and increased strength and energy they get from exercise, and then might gravitate to exercise without nudging from a parent.

To keep teens motivated the activities have to be fun. Support your teen's choices by providing equipment, transportation, and companionship. Peers can play an influential role in teens' lives, so create opportunities for them to be active with their friends.

Help your teen stay active by finding an exercise regimen that fits with his or her schedule. Your teen may not have time to play a team sport at school or in a local league, but many gyms offer teen memberships, and kids may be able to squeeze in a visit before or after school. Your teen might also feel more comfortable doing home exercise videos. If transportation is an obstacle, try coordinating your teen's exercise schedule with your own.

And all teens should limit the time spent in sedentary activities, including watching TV and using the computer.

When to Speak With Your Doctor

If you're concerned about your teen's fitness, speak with your doctor. Teens who are overweight or very sedentary may need to start slowly and the doctor may be able to recommend programs or help you devise a fitness plan.

A teen with a chronic health condition or disability should not be excluded from fitness activities. Some activities may need to be modified or adapted, and some may be too risky. Consult your doctor about which activities are safe.

And some teens may overdo it when it comes to fitness. Young athletes, particularly those involved in gymnastics, wrestling, or dance, may face pressures to lose weight. If your teen refuses to eat certain food groups (such as fats), becomes overly concerned with body image, appears to be exercising compulsively, or experiences a sudden change in weight, talk with your doctor.

Another dangerous issue is the use of steroids, particularly in sports where size and strength are valued. Talk with your doctor if you suspect your teen is using steroids or other performance-enhancing substances.

Finally, speak with your doctor if your teen complains of pain during sports and exercise.

Fitness for Everyone

Everyone can benefit from being physically fit. Staying fit can help improve self-esteem and decrease the risk of serious illnesses (such as heart disease and stroke) later in life. In addition, regular physical activity can help teens learn to meet physical and emotional challenges they face every day.

Help your teen commit to fitness by being a positive role model and exercising regularly, too. For fitness activities you can enjoy together, try bike rides, hitting a tennis ball around, going to a local swimming pool, or even playing games like capture the flag and touch football. Not only are you working together to reach your fitness goals, it's a great opportunity to stay connected with your teen.

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Motivating Preschools to be Active

Preschoolers can be an unstoppable force — running, spinning, leaping, and climbing at every opportunity. Their desire to move, move, and move makes this a great time to cultivate fitness habits that can last through the years.

Children need to be fit for the same reasons adults do: to improve their health and ensure that their bodies can do what they need them to do. Regular exercise helps kids grow, build strong muscles and bones, develop important motor skills, and enhance their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem.

Preschoolers Need to Play

It's a little odd to think about "motivating" a preschooler to be active. (It's not like thoughts of thinner thighs or a slimmer belly are going to spur them to the gym for a workout!) Yet it's important that they stay active for at least 1 hour on most (preferably all) days. So what should parents and caregivers do? You probably already know what will motivate this age group best: fun.

To keep active time fun, know what activities are best for your child's age group and make having a good time the top priority. For instance, preschoolers might groan if you drag them on a boring walk around an exercise track. But if you walk through the woods, stopping to admire nature and tossing rocks into a stream, that walk is much more appealing.

Understanding which skills your child has — and is working on — is another key to keeping it fun. You can have a great time kicking the ball back and forth together, but your child probably wouldn't have much fun if put into a soccer game with all the rules enforced.

Away From Home

Also consider your child's opportunities to be active while away from home. At a child care center or preschool, do kids have access to a playground or large indoor space for activity? The games and equipment need not be fancy. Preschool kids are working on skills such as hopping, balancing on one foot, throwing and catching balls, pedaling tricycles, and skipping.

They'll enjoy simple games such as catch and tag, riding bikes, playing with plastic bats and balls, dancing, and tumbling. And kids still love to play "Duck, Duck, Goose," "London Bridge," "I'm a Little Teapot," or "Simon Says."

The benefits will pay off now and later, according to the National Association for Sports and Physical Education. When kids acquire basic skills (jumping, throwing,

skipping, and catching) in the preschool years, it increases the chances that they'll continue to be physically active as they grow up.

Free Time

A little freedom also can motivate preschoolers to be active. Though some of their physical activity can be structured and led by a parent or caregiver, it pays to let them take the lead sometimes. Encourage free play, which means letting the child choose the activity and make decisions about what to do — all within a safe and supervised environment, of course. This could include exploring the backyard, painting and drawing, doing a puzzle, or dress-up.

During pretend play, preschoolers often like to take on a gender-specific role because they are beginning to identify with members of the same sex. A girl, for instance, might pretend to be her mother by "working" in the garden, while a boy might mimic his father by "cutting" the lawn.

One important message here is that your preschooler is clearly keeping an eye on how you spend your time, so set a good example by exercising regularly. Your child will pick up on this as something parents do and will naturally want to do it as well.

Parents Play an Important Role

In addition to being good role models when it comes to exercise, parents can take these steps to encourage physical activity:

Limit TV and computer time. When you do, kids often find more active stuff to do. Allow no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming. Though lots of computer programs are marketed to preschoolers, none are necessary for their development. If you decide to allow computer use, carefully choose the software and the websites your child can visit.

Know your child. Help find activities your child likes and then present many opportunities to enjoy them. Keep equipment and supplies on hand and, if possible, within easy reach for your preschooler.

Provide close supervision. Preschoolers' physical prowess — like climbing to the top of a playground tower, for instance — often exceeds their ability to judge what's safe and what's dangerous. Likewise, they don't know when it's time to take a break on a hot day.

It's up to your child to have fun outside. It's up to you to bring the water bottle, snack, and sunscreen!

Reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD

Date reviewed: January 2006

Motivating School Age Kids to be Active

Sixty minutes. Ideally, that's how much physical activity kids should get each day of the week. But as kids get older, with increasing demands on their time, getting a full hour of exercise can become a challenge. Some kids may gravitate toward sedentary pursuits like watching TV and computer time. Even doing a lot of studying and reading, while important, can result in too little physical activity.

Meanwhile, during these years, kids often come to a fork in the road when it comes to sports. Those who are athletic might end up increasing their time and commitment to sports, which is great for their physical fitness. But the more casual athletes may lose interest and decide to quit teams and leagues. Unless they find replacement activities, their physical activity levels can go way down.

But being active is a key component of good health for all school-age kids. It will strengthen their muscles and bones and ensure that their bodies are capable of doing normal kid stuff, like lifting a backpack or running a race. It also will help control their weight and decrease their risk of obesity-related illnesses. So how do you get kids motivated to be active, especially those who aren't natural athletes?

Your child can be fit even if he or she isn't the type to win sports trophies. The key is finding activities your child enjoys. The options are many — from in-line skating, to bike riding, to tennis, or even badminton. When kids find an activity that's fun, they'll do it a lot, get better at it, feel accomplished, and want to do it even more. Likewise, if you push them into activities they don't like, they're unlikely to want to do participate and will end up feeling frustrated.

Keep to the Basics for 6- to 8-Year-Olds

Expose younger kids to a variety of activities, games, and sports. Keep the focus on fun. A mix of activities at home and at school is often ideal, and be sure to include some free time for kids make their own decisions about what to do.

At this age, kids are still mastering fundamental physical skills, such as jumping, throwing, kicking, and catching. It will take a few more years before most children can combine these skills the way many 11-year-olds can (for instance, being able to scoop up a baseball, run toward the base, and throw the ball — all in one fluid motion). So if your child is on a sports team, make sure you and the coaches are setting realistic expectations.

Reasonable expectations are also important when it comes to how much kids can handle mentally. Younger kids often are not ready for the pressure of

competition, nor can they grasp complex strategy. Look for teams, leagues, and classes that stress the basics and provide encouragement and praise for kids as they improve their skills. Done correctly, team sports and other group activities can teach kids a lot about teamwork and good sportsmanship.

9- to 12-Year-Olds Are More Coordinated

Older school-age kids usually have mastered basic skills and can start enjoying the benefits of being more coordinated. That means a kid who likes basketball isn't wildly throwing the ball at the basket anymore, but is perfecting the free throw. Kids this age are also better able to understand the rules. Parents of kids involved in team sports might want to talk about handling setbacks and losses, and remind kids that sports should still be fun even as competition heats up.

Whether it's soccer or dance, if your child doesn't enjoy an activity or feels frustrated by failure, it may be time to switch to something else. That doesn't mean the time spent on those endeavors was wasted. Instead, ask what activities your child would like to try next. Achieving this transition smoothly, without making a child feel like a failure, can prevent negative feelings about sports and physical activity in general.

Help Kids Find Their Niche

If you're trying to help your child choose an activity, consider his or her interests, abilities, and body type. A bigger child might be suited for football because size is an advantage. A smaller child might succeed at baseball or might consider a non-team sport.

Also, consider your child's temperament. A mild-mannered boy who might not be comfortable playing football may like the challenge of karate. Likewise, an active girl may not have the patience and control required for ballet, but is well-suited to a more fast-paced activity, like soccer. Personality traits and athletic ability combine to influence a child's attitude toward participation in sports and other physical activities. Which of these three types best describes your child?

The nonathlete: This child may lack athletic ability, lack interest in physical activity, or both. By this age, children are aware of these differences and some kids may have even been teased about them. The danger for a child like this is not leaving one activity that didn't work out; it's abandoning all physical activity altogether.

The casual athlete: This child is interested in being active but is not a star player and is at risk of getting discouraged in a competitive athletic environment. Most kids fall into this category, but in a culture that is obsessed with winning,

it's easy to overlook these kids as athletes. Encourage them to remain active even though they aren't top performers.

The athlete: This child has athletic ability, is committed to a sport or activity, and is likely to ramp up practice time and intensity of competition. Some children are happily settled in a sport or activity by the older school-age years. In this situation, a parent can continue to support the child's efforts while watching for any changes. It's important to ensure that the child manages schoolwork, gets enough rest, and still enjoys the sport. Continue to let your child try out new things and enjoy a variety of physical activities.

Parents Can Make a Difference

No matter what your child's fitness personality, remember that he or she looks to you for guidance and needs your support and encouragement. Also it's important to set a good example, so don't groan about your own exercise, and look for chances to be physically active as a family.

Reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD

Date reviewed: January 2006

Fitness for Non-Athletes

Team sports can boost kids' self-esteem, coordination, and general fitness, and help them learn how to work with other kids and adults.

But some kids aren't natural athletes and they may tell you — directly or indirectly — that they just don't like sports. What then?

Why Some Kids Don't Like Teams

Not every child has to join a team, and with enough other activities, kids can be fit without them. But try to find out why your child isn't interested. You might be able to help address deeper concerns or steer your child toward something else.

Tell your child that you'd like to work on a solution together. This might mean making changes and sticking with the team sport or finding a new activity to try.

Here are some reasons why sports might be a turnoff for kids:

Still Developing Basic Skills

Though many sports programs are available for preschoolers, it's not until about age 6 or 7 that most kids have the physical skills, the attention span, and the ability to grasp the rules needed to play organized sports.

Kids who haven't had much practice in a specific sport might need time to reliably perform necessary skills such as kicking a soccer ball on the run or hitting a baseball thrown from the pitcher's mound. Trying and failing, especially in a game situation, might frustrate them or make them nervous.

What you can do: Practice with your child at home. Whether it's shooting baskets, playing catch, or going for a jog together, you'll give your child an opportunity to build skills and fitness in a safe environment. Your child can try — and, possibly, fail — new things without the self-consciousness of being around peers. And you're also getting a good dose of quality together time.

Coach or League Is Too Competitive

A kid who's already a reluctant athlete might feel extra-nervous when the coach barks out orders or the league focuses heavily on winning.

What you can do: Investigate sports programs before signing your child up for one. Talk with coaches and other parents about the philosophy. Some athletic

associations, like the YMCA, have noncompetitive leagues. In some programs, they don't even keep score.

As kids get older, they can handle more competitive aspects such as keeping score and keeping track of wins and losses for the season. Some kids may be motivated by competitive play, but most aren't ready for the increased pressure until they're 11 or 12 years old. Remember that even in more competitive leagues, the atmosphere should remain positive and supportive for all the participants.

Stage Fright

Kids who aren't natural athletes or are a little shy might be uncomfortable with the pressure of being on a team. More self-conscious kids also might worry about letting their parents, coaches, or teammates down. This is especially true if a child is still working on basic skills and if the league is very competitive.

What you can do: Keep your expectations realistic — most kids don't become Olympic medalists or get sports scholarships. Let your child know the goal is to be fit and have fun. If the coach or league doesn't agree, it's probably time to look for something new.

Still Shopping for a Sport

Some kids haven't found the right sport. Maybe a child who doesn't have the hand-eye coordination for baseball has the drive and the build to be a swimmer, a runner, or a cyclist. The idea of an individual sport also can be more appealing to some kids who like to go it alone.

What you can do: Be open to your child's interests in other sports or activities. That can be tough if, for instance, you just loved basketball and wanted to continue the legacy. But by exploring other options, you give your child a chance to get invested in something he or she truly enjoys.

Other Barriers

Different kids mature at different rates, so expect a wide range of heights, weights, and athletic abilities among kids of the same age group. A child who's much bigger or smaller than other kids of the same age — or less coordinated or not as strong — may feel self-conscious and uncomfortable competing with them.

Kids also might be afraid of getting injured or worried that they can't keep up. Kids who are overweight might be reluctant to participate in a sport, for

example, while a child with asthma might feel more comfortable with sports that require short outputs of energy, like baseball, football, gymnastics, golf, and shorter track and field events.

What you can do: Give some honest thought to your child's strengths, abilities, and temperament, and find an activity that might be a good match. Some kids are afraid of the ball, so they don't like softball or volleyball but may enjoy an activity like running. If your child is overweight, he or she might lack the endurance to run, but might enjoy a sport like swimming. A child who's too small for the basketball team may enjoy gymnastics or wrestling.

Remember that some kids will prefer sports that focus on individual performance rather than teamwork. The goal is to prevent your child from feeling frustrated, wanting to quit, and being turned off from sports and physical activity altogether.

Try to address your child's concerns. By being understanding and providing a supportive environment, you'll help foster success in whatever activity your child chooses.

Fitness Outside of Team Sports

Even kids who once said they hated sports might learn to like team sports as their skills improve or they find the right sport or a league. But even if team sports never thrill your child, there's plenty a kid can do to get the recommended 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day.

Free play can be very important for kids who don't play a team sport. What's free play? It's the activity kids get when they're left to their own devices, like shooting hoops, riding bikes, playing whiffleball, playing tag, jumping rope, or dancing.

Kids might also enjoy individual sports or other organized activities that can boost fitness, such as:

- swimming
- horseback riding
- dance classes
- inline skating
- cycling
- cheerleading
- skateboarding
- hiking
- golf
- tennis
- fencing
- gymnastics
- martial arts
- yoga and other fitness classes
- Ultimate Frisbee
- running

Supporting Your Kid's Choices

Even if the going's tough, work with your child to find something active that he or she likes. Try to remain open-minded. Maybe your child is interested in an activity that is not offered at school. If your daughter wants to try flag football or ice hockey, for example, help her find a local league or talk to school officials about starting up a new team.

You'll need to be patient if your child has difficulty choosing and sticking to an activity. It often takes several tries before kids find one that feels like the right fit. But when something clicks, you'll be glad you invested the time and effort. For your child, it's one big step toward developing active habits that can last a lifetime.

Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD

Date reviewed: September 2008

Guidelines for Setting Goals

Goal Setting

Coach's Tip: Helping your team and each of your athletes set goals does not have to be a difficult process. If you understand the concepts of goal setting described in the article [Goal Setting: The Concepts](#), and utilize the guidelines described below you should do fine.

- Set specific, objective goals. By objective, we mean that the goal must be stated in measurable quantitative terms. For example, a tennis player might set a goal of hitting 70% good first serves. You must avoid subjective goals that are based on the opinion of the evaluator, such as most valuable player. If you want to name a MVP at the end of the season, that's fine, just don't use it as a goal.
- Use a combination of long-term and short-term goals. Short-term goals provide the means and direction to achieving the long-term goal. Both are necessary.
- Evaluate frequently. You and your athletes want to know how you are progressing towards achieving the goals you have set. Relatively frequent evaluation will help keep the athletes motivated as they see progress or encourage them to work harder if they are behind. It also lets you examine the effectiveness of your practice plans and make adjustments as necessary.
- Set reachable and challenging goals. This applies to every goal set. You must find the middle ground between hard unachievable goals and easy, non-motivating goals. This is a good place for the coach and athlete to work together in setting the goals. When athletes are involved in setting the goals they feel responsible for the goals and will be motivated to achieve them. If you set goals for the athlete, they may not feel any sense of ownership and not be as concerned whether or not they achieve those goals.
- Set goals with individual differences in mind. Each athlete is an individual and must have his or her own personalized goals. This will make the goals meaningful to the athlete.

Now the hard one: set individual athlete's goals in conjunction with the team's goals. Obviously, what sport you are coaching will affect the difficulty of accomplishing this guideline. Typically, the team must get together and set the team goals first. Then, the coach will assist each individual athlete in setting his or her goals within the constraints of that athlete's role on the team.

Coaching Motivation for Females

Coaches Tip: The key factor in coaching female athletes is the use of positive reinforcement in participation motivation. Positive, constructive feedback and

praise is extremely important for the development of female athletes. It is necessary to provide continuous feedback and encouragement to assist the female athlete in their skill development. So, what exactly is motivation? Motivation is defined as the tendency for the direction and selectivity of behavior to be controlled by its connections to consequences and the tendency of this behavior to persist until a goal is achieved. The ability to motivate is part of the success formula. It is far easier for some coaches than others to get their athletes to run through the proverbial brick wall.

It is a very important ingredient for coaches to be aware of individual differences in their female athletes. The majority of females are turned off by the following shows of emotions: yelling, screaming, and throwing things and other emotional displays. Most females prefer a more serene, meditative approach to getting ready to participate. Individualizing motivation becomes important here. Knowing which athletes to pat on the back and which ones to emotionally exhort to perform are vital to coaching.

Also, when coaching females then you must be a good teacher and listener. Ultimately, all coaching is nothing more than teaching. The coach should be knowledgeable about the activity being taught. The female athletes need to be taught the basic skills or fundamentals essential to excellent performance. Consistent with being a good listener, the coach should be a sensitive sounding board for problems, complaints and wishes of the female players. Team leaders should be utilized as allies in providing keys to more ably working with others players.

When coaching female players, you must set goals to help motivate your team to strive for set standards. Finally, a good coach will be forceful but democratic in allowing for considerable individual input into the everyday management of the sport. Players certainly should not run the operation but they should have input because they are invaluable sources of insights and information. When misbehavior occurs, the coach must become a disciplinarian. Players need to adhere to a reasonable set of rules both on and off the field of play.

A high level of self-confidence does not characterize numerous female athletes. The coach must use various strategies to enhance self-confidence: instruction drilling, encouraging the use of positive self-talk, acting confident in yourself, liberal use of praise and hard physical conditioning. When coaching female athletes, the coach would do well to incorporate the best of these techniques in your motivational repertoire.

Motivation of Young Athletes

Coach's Tip: Why do children want to play organized sports? What are their goals, hopes and aspirations? Each child has his or her own specific answers to these questions. Understanding their reasons for wanting to play sports is a critical first step towards helping children to have the best possible experiences in sport.

Articles in magazines and newspapers as well as some coaching textbooks often suggest that socialization is a major value of participating in youth sports. Certainly, learning to work together in a group and striving to achieve group goals are potentially important outcomes. Learning about and practicing sportsmanship also is a worthwhile goal as is understanding how to deal with success and failure-winning and losing.

Is this what the kids expect to get out of playing organized sports? Actually, NO! Numerous research studies completed in the last 20 years have asked youth sport participants why they decided to participate in organized sports. Although there is some variation in the ranked order of the reasons that children cite, depending on the particular sport they are playing, the top reasons are very consistent. Children expect to have FUN, learn SKILLS, develop FITNESS, and participate because they enjoy COMPETITION. Socialization related reasons typically is near the bottom of the list, with sportsmanship somewhere in the middle. Winning and receiving individual awards (medals, trophies, etc) also do not appear among the top reasons. The bottom line is that children want an opportunity to participate in competitive sports, to develop the skills and fitness that will allow them to play effectively, and to have fun doing it.

Once children have decided to participate in organized youth sports, the next issue in terms of motivation is what keeps them in sport or, conversely, why do many children drop out after only participating for a couple of years? As one might expect, the primary reasons for continuing to participate in sport are fundamentally the same as the reasons they first started sport, that is, to have FUN, to learn SKILLS, to develop FITNESS, and because they enjoy COMPETITION.

It is interesting to note that in sports that are particularly physically strenuous, such as swimming, fun drops down the list in terms of the order of importance as a motivating factor. It's not that they don't enjoy the competition, it's just that practices tend to be hard. Although many children continue to participate in youth sports for many years and even move up to higher levels of competition, 25% of all children drop out within the first 3 years.

There is a wide variety of reasons why this happens. In a recent study of almost 700 youth sport drop outs, the top ranked reasons the kids gave for quitting were: I lost interest, the coach played favorites, I was not having any fun, and I developed other non-sport interests. Of these, only the development of non-sport interests was related to the age of the child, meaning that as they got older they were more likely to drop out because they became interested in activities outside of sport. Because children rarely drop out for just one specific reason, we also did a cluster analysis of the reasons for dropping out.

In this analysis we found that the primary combination of factors contributing to dropping out was related to the team environment. Specifically, the children felt that their coaches were not doing a good job (see the Coaches' article in this issue for further details), there was too much pressure to win, and the members of the team did not get along well with each other. Fortunately, these are problems that can be resolved. Dropping out of youth sports can be a very emotional situation for children and their parents. It doesn't have to be if it is kept in perspective. Children (and adults, for that matter) drop out of a wide variety of activities all the time. Often it is nothing more than someone trying to find an activity that they can enjoy and find worthwhile doing. Sport is not for everyone.

Increasing Self-Confidence in Female Athletes

Coach's Tip:

As a coach, you may have dealt with female athletes who lack the self-confidence needed to become successful. Why do females tend to have lower levels of self-confidence than males? A number of female athletes suffer reduced confidence levels when they are put into situations that they perceive to be gender-role inappropriate. In other words, girls do not feel that they perform as well when they participate in a male appropriate activity, such as football or wrestling. A female's self-confidence level depends on three key factors.

First of all is the nature of the task. Women respond to certain tasks with a higher level of confidence than others. For example, a woman is likely to perform a task they perceive to be gender inappropriate, such as bodybuilding, with little confidence.

Secondly, females that are provided with clear and positive feedback are more likely to perform with the same confidence level as males. On the other hand, if females are presented with feedback that is unclear or negative, the likelihood of their confidence level being as high as males is very low.

The last key factor that affects females' confidence levels is social comparison. This means that females tend to produce higher levels of self-confidence when working alone, or in situations that do not involve social comparison. In

contrast, their level of confidence will decrease when they perform in an environment where they can compare themselves to others. There are some strategies that can be used to increase self-confidence in female athletes. These would include:

- Ensuring their success
- Avoid gender inappropriate activities
- Avoid ambiguity through effective communication
- Use effective modeling of correct performance

Decrease competitive situations during learning

Maintaining a Positive Team Environment

Coach's Tip: Athletes who had dropped out said that a combination of factors related to the team environment caused them to drop out. What are these factors? The cluster analysis identified eight:

- The coach didn't understand kids
- They didn't get to play enough
- The coach was a poor teacher
- There was too much pressure to win
- They didn't like their teammates
- Poor sportsmanship
- The coach played favorites
- The coach put too much pressure on me

It is important that coaches recognize that the title "Coach" does not guarantee automatic respect and devotion from their athletes. The children on your team expect a lot from you. Four of the eight factors on the list are coaching behaviors. Even the other factors are influenced by the coach. Most coaches do a great job working with their young athletes. Hopefully you are one of those. The purpose of this article is not to be critical of coaches but rather to reinforce the importance of each coach thinking carefully about what you say and do as you coach your athletes. Good youth sport coaches are individuals who understand that they are coaching children, not college or professional athletes. These coaches spend much of their time teaching skills the young athletes need to be successful. Having fun is much more important to your athletes than winning. Sure, winning is part of the sport experience, but not the primary focus.

Look at the list of concerns expressed by the athletes. What can you do to change these so that your athletes have a positive experience? Do you pay attention to how your athletes act toward each other? Encourage your athletes

to help each other, not criticize a teammate's performance. Sportsmanship is taught by example. Are you a good role model as you interact with your own athletes, other teams and coaches, and the officials? Can you go home after a practice or game, look at yourself in a mirror, and say I did the best I could for the children on my team? If you can, you should be proud of yourself. If you can't, you must try harder the next time. Do everything you can to make the athletes on your team thrilled to call you "Coach"!

Teaching Sportsmanship

Emily was crying by the time the softball game ended. It wasn't because her team had lost. It wasn't because she was unhappy about her own playing. It wasn't even because of anything the other team had said or done. Emily's tears came after her dad yelled at her — in front of all her teammates — for missing the fly ball that could have saved the game. Emily is just 8 years old.

If your child has ever participated in a sport, you've undoubtedly met people like Emily's dad, parents who behave inappropriately and upset their kids. These parents get so wrapped up in winning and losing or how well their own kids perform that they lose sight of what's really important. They forget that one of the most important goals of kids' sports is to promote a sense of good sportsmanship.

What Is Good Sportsmanship?

Good sportsmanship is when teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials treat each other with respect. Kids learn the basics of sportsmanship from the adults in their lives, especially their parents and their coaches. Kids who see adults behaving in a sportsmanlike way gradually come to understand that the real winners in sports are those who know how to persevere and to behave with dignity — whether they win or lose a game.

Parents can help their kids understand that good sportsmanship includes both small gestures and heroic efforts. It starts with something as simple as shaking hands with opponents before a game and includes acknowledging good plays made by others and accepting bad calls gracefully.

Displaying good sportsmanship isn't always easy: It can be tough to congratulate the opposing team after losing a close or important game. But the kids who learn how to do it will benefit in many ways.

Kids who bully or taunt others on the playing field aren't likely to change their behavior when in the classroom or in social situations. In the same way, a child who practices good sportsmanship is likely to carry the respect and appreciation of other people into every other aspect of life.

Good Sports Are Winners

Ask first- or second-graders who won a game and they may answer, "I think it was a tie." It's likely the question isn't of any real interest at that age. Kids may be more eager to talk about the hits they got or the catches they almost made.

But as they move into older and more competitive leagues, kids become more focused on winning. They often forget to have fun. Without constant reminders and good examples, they may also forget what behavior is appropriate before, during, and after a sporting event.

Kids who have coaches who care only about being in first place and say that anything goes as long as they win, pick up the message that it's OK to be ruthless on the field. If parents constantly pressure them to play better or second-guess their every move, kids get the message that they're only as good as their last good play — and they'll try anything to make one.

Adults who emphasize good sportsmanship, however, see winning as just one of several goals they'd like their kids to achieve. They help young athletes take pride in their accomplishments and in their improving skills, so that the kids see themselves as winners, even if the scoreboard doesn't show the numbers going in their favor.

The best coaches — and parents — encourage their kids to play fair, to have fun, and to concentrate on helping the team while polishing their own skills.

Fostering Good Sportsmanship

Remember the saying "Actions speak louder than words"? That's especially true when it comes to teaching your kids the basics of good sportsmanship. Your behavior during practices and games will influence them more than any pep talk or lecture you give them.

Here are some suggestions on how to build sportsmanship in your kids:

- Unless you're coaching your child's team, you need to remember that you're the parent. Shout words of encouragement, not directions, from the sidelines (there is a difference!).

- If you are your kid's coach, don't expect too much out of your own child. Don't be harder on him or her than on anyone else on the team, but don't play favorites either.
- Keep your comments positive. Don't bad-mouth coaches, players, or game officials. If you have a serious concern about the way that games or practices are being conducted, or if you're upset about other parents' behavior, discuss it privately with the coach or with a league official.
- After a competition, it's important not to dwell on who won or lost. Instead, try asking, "How did you feel you did during the game?" If your child feels weak at a particular skill, like throwing or catching, offer to work on it together before the next game.
- Applaud good plays no matter who makes them.
- Set a good example with your courteous behavior toward the parents of kids on the other team. Congratulate them when their kids win.
- Remember that it's your kids, not you, who are playing. Don't push them into a sport because it's what you enjoyed. As kids get older, let them choose what sports they want to play and decide the level of commitment they want to make.
- Keep your perspective. It's just a game. Even if the team loses every game of the season, it's unlikely to ruin your child's life or chances of success.
- Look for examples of good sportsmanship in professional athletes and point them out to your kids. Talk about the bad examples, too, and why they upset you.
- Finally, don't forget to have fun. Even if your child isn't the star, enjoy the game while you're thinking of all the benefits your child is gaining — new skills, new friends, and attitudes that can help all through life.

Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD

Date reviewed: October 2008

Originally reviewed by: Steve Sanders, PhD

Technique of Stretching

Defining Stretching

Stretching is the deliberate lengthening of muscles in order to increase muscle flexibility and joint range of motion. Stretching activities are an important part of any exercise or rehabilitation program. They help warm the body up prior to activity thus decreasing the risk of injury as well as muscle soreness.

The benefits of stretching are many and have been proven through various studies over time. Stretching benefits people of all ages, and is intended for the young as well as the elderly population.

The Benefits of Stretching

According to the Mayo Clinic, the top five benefits of stretching include:

- **Increased flexibility and joint range of motion:**
Flexible muscles can improve your daily performance. Tasks such as lifting packages, bending to tie your shoes or hurrying to catch a bus become easier and less tiring. Flexibility tends to diminish as you get older, but you can regain and maintain it.
- **Improved circulation:**
Stretching increases blood flow to your muscles. Blood flowing to your muscles brings nourishment and gets rid of waste byproducts in the muscle tissue. Improved circulation can help shorten your recovery time if you've had any muscle injuries.
- **Better posture:**
Frequent stretching can help keep your muscles from getting tight, allowing you to maintain proper posture. Good posture can minimize discomfort and keep aches and pains at a minimum.
- **Stress relief:**
Stretching relaxes tight, tense muscles that often accompany stress.
- **Enhanced coordination:**
Maintaining the full range-of-motion through your joints keeps you in better balance. Coordination and balance will help keep you mobile and less prone to injury from falls, especially as you get older.

Safety Tips

Stretching can be highly beneficial if done properly. If done improperly, it can cause real damage. Here are some helpful tips to ensure you are stretching safely and preventing injury:

- **Always warm up before doing any stretching exercises.** Stretching a cold muscle increases the risk of pulls or tears. Think of your muscles like you would a rubber band. It's easy to stretch a warm rubber band, but if you try to stretch a cold one, you risk cracking or breaking it. Don't treat your muscles like a cold rubber band!
- **Stretching should never cause pain**, especially in the joints. If you experience pain, you are probably stretching too far. Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or a mild pulling sensation, but not pain.
- **Never bounce into a stretch**- this can cause your muscles to tighten, increasing your risk of injury. Stretch in a slow, steady motion.
- **Do not lock your joints when you stretch.** For example, your arms and legs should be straight (or slightly bent) when you stretch them, but the elbows and knees should not be locked. This puts additional and unnecessary stress on the joints.
- **Never hold your breath while stretching.** Try to breathe normally, in through the nose and out through the mouth. This will make your stretching a more relaxing experience.
- **Take your time.** The long-sustained, mild stretch reduces unwanted muscle tension and tightness.
- **Do not compare yourself with others.** Everyone has different degrees of flexibility. Comparisons may lead to overstretching.
- **If you have had a hip replacement**, do not cross your legs or bend your hips past a 90-degree angle during any of your stretching exercises.

Follow these sensible guidelines and you'll find that a basic stretching program will provide you with benefits for many years to come!

Proper Stretching Technique

It is essential to practice proper stretching techniques. Doing so will allow you to avoid any unnecessary injury. Tips to proper stretching technique include the following:

- **Warm up first**
Stretching muscles when they're cold increases your risk of pulled muscles. Warm up by walking while gently pumping your arms, or do a favorite exercise at low intensity for five minutes.
- **Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds** It takes time to lengthen tissues safely. Hold your stretches for at least 30 seconds — and up to 60 seconds for a really tight muscle or problem area. That can seem like a long time, so wear a watch or keep an eye on the clock to make sure you're holding your stretches long enough. For most of your muscle groups, if you hold the stretches for at least 30 seconds, you'll need to do each stretch only once.
- **Don't bounce**
Bouncing as you stretch can cause small tears (microtears) in the muscle, which leave scar tissue as the muscle heals. The scar tissue tightens the muscle even further, making you even less flexible — and more prone to pain.
- **Focus on a pain-free stretch**
If you feel pain as you stretch, you've gone too far. Back off to the point where you don't feel any pain, then hold the stretch.
- **Relax and breathe freely**
- Don't hold your breath while you're stretching
- **Stretch both sides**
Make sure your joint range of motion is as equal as possible on each side of your body
- **Stretch before and after activity**
Light stretching after your warm-up followed by a more thorough stretching regimen after your workout is your best bet

With your new-found knowledge of the proper techniques and benefits of stretching, it will be easy to incorporate this activity into your exercise/rehabilitation regimen. Here are a few good stretches to try:

- **Low Back Stretches**
Three quick and easy exercises to stretch the lower muscles of your back.
- **Morning Stretches**
Stretching in the morning is a great way to "waken" up your muscles, and get them ready for the day.
- **Self Assisted Neck Stretches**
Stretches can be done with self assistance to obtain a more efficient stretch. Here you can learn how to perform self assisted stretches of the neck.

Although the benefits of stretching are many, is not for everyone. Conditions in which stretching should be avoided include:

- **Acute Muscle Strains**

People who have suffered an acute muscle strain should avoid placing further stress on the muscle through stretching activities. The injured muscle should be given time to rest. Stretching muscle fibers in the acute period can result in further injury.

- **Fractured Bones**

After breaking a bone, the fracture site needs time to heal. Stretching muscles that surround this injured area can place stress on the bone and prevent it from healing as well as further displace the break. Stretching a joint that surrounds a broken bone should never be done until cleared by your physician.

- **Joint Sprains**

When you sprain your joint, you overstretch the ligaments that help stabilize the bones that form the joint. For this reason stretching early after a joint sprain should be avoided. As with fractures, these structures need time to heal and stretching too early in the injury will delay this process.

Examples of Proper Stretching

Upper Body



Internal Rotation



External Rotation



Wrist Extension



Wrist Flexion



Adduction



Horizontal Adduction



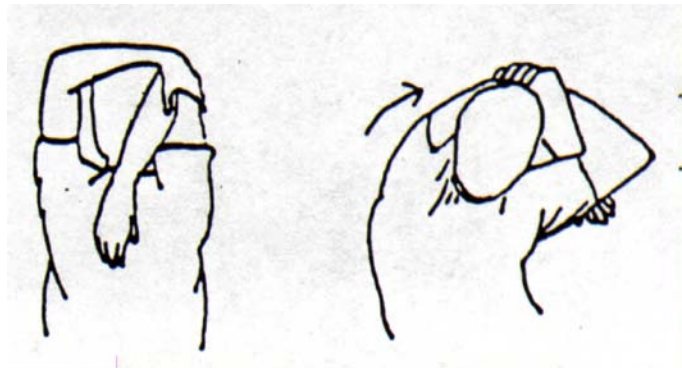
Chest



Chicken

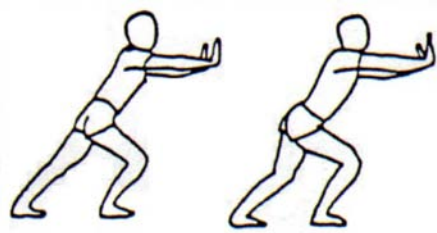


Corner



Triceps

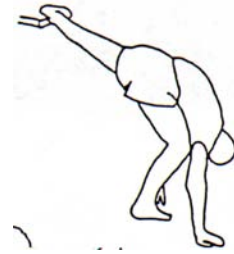
Lower Body



Calf/Achilles



Groin/Butterfly



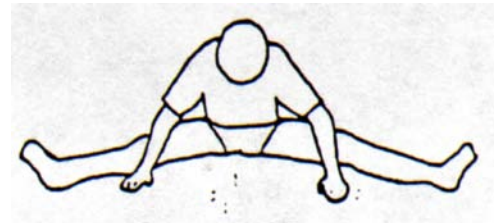
Standing Groin



Bent Knee Hamstring



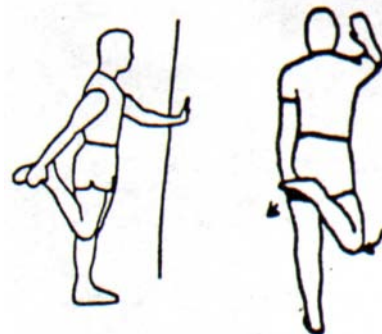
Seated Hamstring



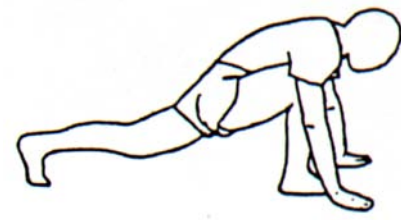
"V" Hamstring



Standing Hamstring

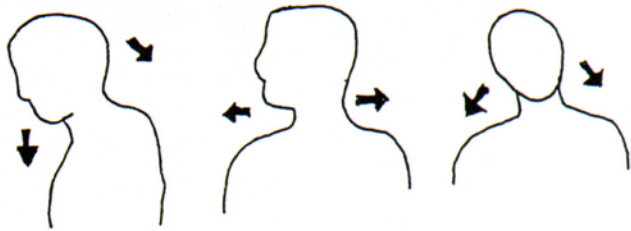


Standing Quad



Hip Flexor

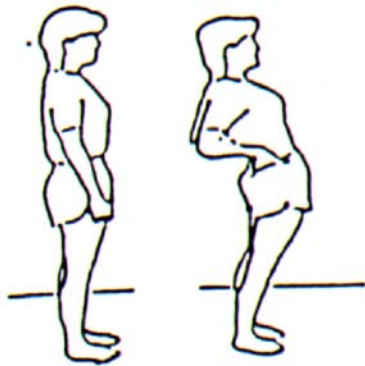
Back



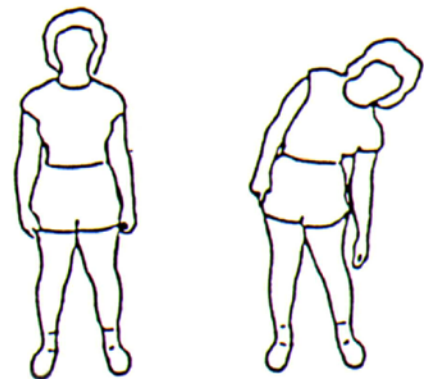
Cervical Stretch



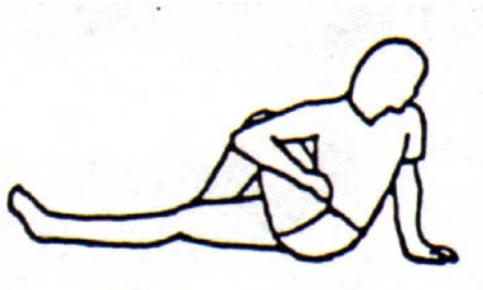
Gluteus Stretch



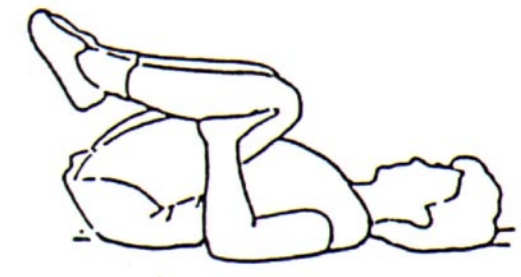
Back Extension



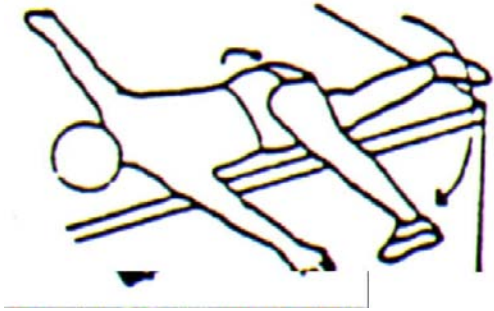
Back Lateral Flexion



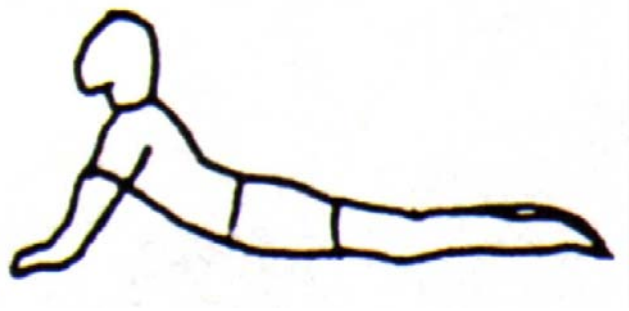
Trunk Twister



Gluteus Stretch



Low Back Twist



Prone Extension

Other Team Stretches

Stretch #1

- 1) Lie on your back with knees bent and your feet flat on the floor
- 2) Place your bands on the back of your thighs and pull your legs toward your chest
- 3) Pull until a gentle stretch is felt
- 4) Hold for 15 seconds
- 5) Return to the starting position
- 6) Repeat 10 more times

Stretch #2

- 1) Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor
- 2) Keeping your back flat on the floor, rotate your hips to the left, lowering your legs down to the floor until a gentle stretch is felt
- 3) Hold for 15 seconds
- 4) Return to the starting position
- 5) Repeat 10 more times
- 6) Keeping your back flat on the floor, this time rotate your hips to the right, lowering your legs down to the floor until a gentle stretch is felt
- 7) Hold for 15 seconds
- 8) Return to the starting position
- 9) Repeat 10 more times

Stretch #3

- 1) Lie on your stomach
- 2) Prop yourself up on your elbows extending your back
- 3) Start straightening your elbows, further extending your back
- 4) Continue straightening your elbows until a gentle stretch is felt
- 5) Hold for 15 seconds
- 6) Return to the starting position
- 7) Repeat 10 more times

Stretch #4

- 1) Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor
- 2) Push the small of your back down and into the floor by tightening your lower abdominal muscles
- 3) Hold for a count of ten
- 4) Return to starting position and repeat 10 more times

Stretch #5

- 1) Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor
- 2) Push down through your feet as you slowly lift your bottom up off the floor
- 3) Hold for a count of ten
- 4) Return to starting position and repeat 10 more times

Stretch #6

- 1) Kneel down on the floor in an all four position on your hands and knees
- 2) Curl your back up toward the ceiling like and angry cat
- 3) Hold for a count of five
- 4) Return to starting position
- 5) Pull your stomach down to the floor hollowing out your back
- 6) Hold for a count of five
- 7) Return to starting position
- 8) Repeat ten more times

Stretch #7

- 1) Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the ground
- 2) Curl your neck, upper back, and low back forward until your chest is on your thighs and you can touch the ground with your hands
- 3) Hold for a count of 10
- 4) Return to starting position and repeat ten more times

Stretch #8

- 1) Stand up straight with your arms at your sides and your feet shoulder width apart
- 2) Bend your trunk sideways to the left while sliding your left hand down your thigh and reaching your right arm over your head
- 3) Hold for a count of 10
- 4) Return to starting position

5) Now bend your trunk sideways to the right while sliding your right hand down your thigh and reaching your left arm over your head

6) Hold for a count of 10

7) Repeat above 10 more times

Preventing Children's Sports Injuries

Participation in any sport, whether it's recreational bike riding or Pee-Wee football, can teach kids to stretch their limits and learn sportsmanship and discipline. But any sport also carries the potential for injury.

By knowing the causes of sports injuries and how to prevent them, you can help make athletics a positive experience for your child.

Causes of Sports Injuries

Kids can be particularly susceptible to sports injuries for a variety of reasons. Kids, particularly those younger than 8 years old, are less coordinated and have slower reaction times than adults because they are still growing and developing.

In addition, kids mature at different rates. Often there's a substantial difference in height and weight between kids of the same age. And when kids of varying sizes play sports together, there may be an increased risk of injury.

As kids grow bigger and stronger, the potential for injury increases, largely because of the amount of force involved. For example, a collision between two 8-year-old Pee-Wee football players who weigh 65 or 70 pounds each does not produce as much force as that produced by two 16-year-old high school football players who may each weigh up to 200 pounds.

Also, kids may not assess the risks of certain activities as fully as adults might. So they might unknowingly take risks that can result in injuries.

Preventing Sports Injuries

You can help prevent your child from being injured by following some simple guidelines:

Use of Proper Equipment

It's important for kids to use proper equipment and safety gear that is the correct size and fits well. For example, kids should wear helmets for baseball,

softball, bicycle riding, and hockey. They also should wear helmets while they're inline skating or riding scooters and skateboards.

For racquet sports and basketball, ask about any protective eyewear, like shatterproof goggles. Ask your child's coach about the appropriate helmets, shoes, mouth guards, athletic cups and supporters, and padding.

Protective equipment should be approved by the organizations that govern each of the sports. Hockey facemasks, for example, should be approved by the Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Bicycle helmets should have a safety certification sticker from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Also, all equipment should be properly maintained to ensure its effectiveness. In the United States, the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) sets many of the standards for helmets, facemasks, and shin guards. In addition to meeting the NOCSAE standards, all equipment should be properly maintained to ensure its effectiveness over time.

Maintenance and Appropriateness of Playing Surfaces

Check that playing fields are not full of holes and ruts that might cause kids to fall or trip. Kids doing high-impact sports, like basketball and running, should do them on surfaces like tracks and wooden basketball courts, which can be more forgiving than surfaces like concrete.

Adequate Adult Supervision and Commitment to Safety

Any team sport or activity that kids participate in should be supervised by qualified adults. Select leagues and teams that have the same commitment to safety and injury prevention that you do.

The team coach should have training in first aid and CPR, and the coach's philosophy should promote players' well-being. A coach with a win-at-all-costs attitude may encourage kids to play through injury and may not foster good sportsmanship. Be sure that the coach enforces playing rules and requires that safety equipment be used at all times.

Additionally, make sure your kids are matched for sports according to their skill level, size, and physical and emotional maturity.

Proper Preparation

Just as you wouldn't send a child who can't swim to a swimming pool, it's important not to send kids to play a sport that they're unprepared to play. Make sure that your child knows how to play the sport before going out on the field.

Your child should be adequately prepared with warm-ups and training sessions before practices as well as before games. This will help ensure that your child has fun and reduce the chances of an injury.

In addition, your child should drink plenty of fluids and be allowed to rest during practices and games.

Common Types of Sports Injuries

Three common types of sports injuries in children are acute injuries, overuse injuries, and reinjuries:

Acute Injuries

Acute injuries occur suddenly and are usually associated with some form of trauma. In younger children, acute injuries typically include minor bruises, sprains, and strains. Teen athletes are more likely to sustain more severe injuries, including broken bones and torn ligaments.

More severe acute injuries that can occur, regardless of age, include: eye injuries, including scratched corneas, detached retinas, and blood in the eye; broken bones or ligament injuries; brain injuries, including concussions, skull fractures, brain hemorrhages; and spinal cord injuries.

Acute injuries often occur because of a lack of proper equipment or the use of improper equipment. For example, without protective eyewear, eye injuries are extremely common in basketball and racquet sports. In addition, many kids playing baseball and softball have suffered broken legs or ankles from sliding into immobile bases.

Overuse Injuries

Overuse injuries occur from repetitive actions that put too much stress on the bones and muscles. Although these injuries can occur in adults as well as kids, they're more problematic in a child athlete because of the effect they may have on bone growth.

All kids who play sports can develop an overuse injury, but the likelihood increases with the amount of time a child spends on the sport.

Some of the most common types of overuse injuries are:

- **anterior knee pain:** Anterior knee pain is pain in the front of the knee under the kneecap. The knee will be sore and swollen due to tendon or cartilage inflammation. The cause is usually muscle tightness in the hamstrings or quadriceps, the major muscle groups around the thigh.
- **Little League elbow:** Repetitive throwing sometimes results in pain and tenderness in the elbow. The ability to flex and extend the arm may be affected, but the pain typically occurs after the follow-through of the throw. In addition to pain, pitchers sometimes complain of loss of velocity or decreased endurance.
- **swimmer's shoulder:** Swimmer's shoulder is an inflammation (swelling) of the shoulder caused by the repeated stress of the overhead motion associated with swimming or throwing a ball. The pain typically begins intermittently but may progress to continuous pain in the back of the shoulder.
- **shin splints:** Shin splints are characterized by pain and discomfort on the front of the lower parts of the legs. They are often caused by repeated running on a hard surface or overtraining at the beginning of a season.
- **spondylolysis:** Spondylolysis often results from trauma or from repetitive flexing, then overextension, twisting, or compression of the back muscles. This can cause persistent lower back pain. Spondylolysis is commonly seen in kids who participate in soccer, football, weight lifting, gymnastics, wrestling, and diving.

Overuse injuries can be caused or aggravated by:

- growth spurts or an imbalance between strength and flexibility
- inadequate warm-up
- excessive activity (for example, increased intensity, duration, or frequency of playing and/or training)
- playing the same sport year-round or multiple sports during the same season
- improper technique (for example, overextending on a pitch)
- unsuitable equipment (for example, nonsupportive athletic shoes)

Reinjuries

Reinjury occurs when an athlete returns to the sport before a previous injury has sufficiently healed. Athletes are at a much greater risk for reinjury when they return to the game before recovering fully. Doing so places stress upon the injury and forces the body to compensate for the weakness, which can put the athlete at greater risk for injuring another body part.

Reinjury can be avoided by allowing an injury to completely heal. Once the doctor has approved a return to the sport, make sure that your child properly warms up and cools down before and after exercise.

Sudden exertion can also cause reinjury, so your child should re-enter the sport gradually. Explain that easing back into the game at a sensible pace is better than returning to the hospital!

Treating Sports Injuries

Treatment of sports injuries varies by the type of injury.

For acute injuries, many pediatric sports medicine specialists usually take a "better safe than sorry" approach. If an injury appears to affect basic functioning in any way — for example, if your child can't bend a finger, is limping, or has had a change in consciousness — first aid should be administered immediately. A doctor should then see the child. If the injury seems to be more serious, it's important to take your child to the nearest hospital emergency department.

For overuse injuries, the philosophy is similar. If a child begins complaining of pain, it's the body's way of saying there's a problem. Have the child examined by a doctor who can then determine whether it's necessary to see a sports medicine specialist. A doctor can usually diagnose many of these conditions by taking a medical history, examining the child, and ordering some routine tests.

It's important to get overuse injuries diagnosed and treated to prevent them from developing into larger chronic problems. The doctor may advise the child to temporarily modify or eliminate an activity to limit stress on the body.

In some cases, the child may not be able to resume the sport without risking further injury. Because overuse injuries are characterized by swelling, the doctor may prescribe rest, medications to help reduce inflammation, and physical therapy. When recovery is complete, your child's technique or training schedule may need to be adjusted to prevent the injury from flaring up again.

Reviewed by: Joseph A. Congeni, MD

Date reviewed: November 2008

Healthy Living Articles

Article 1

Teaching children at school to exercise can cut obesity rates by a third

By Jenny Hope

Teaching children at school to be physically active every day can cut the rate of overweight pupils by a third, say researchers.

Lessons in healthy eating and encouraging children to watch less TV curbs weight gain in just a year, according to new studies presented at the European Society of Cardiology congress in Munich.

Children in primary school who had daily reminders about healthy living gained 260g less body fat - the equivalent of a pack of butter - compared with those doing standard PE lessons.

Researchers claim the success of school-based programs could halt the epidemic of obesity among youngsters, with teachers becoming new role models.

Around one in three schoolchildren in the UK is overweight or obese.

In a study of almost 300 pupils aged around 12, daily exercise lessons had a dramatic effect on their fitness and weight.

Half the children were given extra exercise in classes lasting about an hour, while the remainder continued with regular school sports of just two hours a week.

After a year, the percentage of overweight schoolchildren having exercise classes dropped from 13 to nine per cent.

There was no change among the other children, while a comparison with a specialist school doing 12 hours of high level exercise and competitive sports a week showed just two per cent were overweight.

There was also a significant improvement in physical fitness and lung function in pupils taking daily exercise, said researchers at the University of Leipzig, Germany.

A separate study looked at an obesity intervention program for 1,000 primary schoolchildren aged seven to eight years.

Half were asked to cut down TV and computer viewing, and consumption of sugary drinks, while having extra tuition about healthy living at school.

They had 'key messages' about diet and exercise included in a range of lessons including maths and music, along with two five-to-seven minute sessions of exercise a day.

Their parents were sent letters about helping to prevent weight gain and the family was given homework, said Professor Martin Wabitsch, of the University of Ulm, Germany, who headed the study.

He said the findings showed less weight gain after a year among the children getting healthy living lessons, a reduction of 260g compared with similar children having normal lessons.

He said findings from the study were still being analyzed but the 'active' children watched less TV, drank fewer sugary drinks and had slimmer waists.

'These interventions had a small but significant effect that's sustainable' he said.

Prof Wabitsch said preventive health for children had shifted from medicine to schools.

He said 'Vaccination is medical history; children spend a lot of time in school where we can change their eating and physical behavior.'

'It's not a duty so far for schools, but there could be a new role for teachers.'

'They can be role models and guide children's behavior as parents should do but don't do anymore.'

Currently, schools in England must cover healthy diets and lifestyles but only in science lessons.

PSHE (personal, social and health education), where teachers could cover the subject in more detail and give guidance on healthy eating, is not compulsory.

While the vast majority of schools include PSHE on their curriculum, they have discretion over the content of the lessons.

Tam Fry, from the National Obesity Forum, said the studies were very well conducted and intervened at key times in child development.

He said: 'Traditionally the ages of six to eight are seen as a risk point for later overweight and obesity. It is key that the school interventions are followed up with the parents as all the gains made at school can be negated if not followed at home as well.'

'In the UK we have precious little education for parents about parenthood. Quite often parents don't know what to teach their children because weren't taught it in the first place.'

Dr Jeremy Pearson, assistant medical director of the British Heart Foundation charity, said involving teachers and parents was critical.

He said 'We have to integrate lessons for the rest of your life into the school curriculum.'

'We have to start early. I'm not sure how good the UK is at this and whether just planning more periods for games or running tracks is enough.'

'The BHF does individual projects in schools but we need a nationwide approach from the Government that would lead to the take-up of programs proven to be of some use.'

Article 2

Kids physical fitness - top ten tips

Select the right equipment, sign them up for swimming class, and fit with them.

By David Leonhardt

Like most parents, you are probably worried about the poor state of your kids' fitness...or their total lack of fitness altogether. Very few children get the exercise they need these days, with the lure of so many screens with so many functions, coming in almost as many sizes. The result is a legacy of youth obesity in kids as young as six years old and well into their teens.

To help you cope with your kids' missing fitness, we offer ten tips you can apply in your kid's life before it is too late:

A) Kick them out. It is a proven fact that kids who are throwing balls, skipping rope, chasing each other and climbing on structures are more fit than kids who sit around the house. Just one detail...don't kick their cell phones and their iPods and their other anti-fitness equipment out with them.

B) Try more physical playing with your children. Chase your kids around. Bonus, you get exercise too.

C) Make Christmas a celebration of fitness. No, don't chase your kids up the tree...just give them some fitness toys instead of toys they would play sitting down.

D) Make fitness a family affair. You have probably already noticed how hard it is to find time to do things together as a family. This is your golden opportunity. The element of peer pressure (the whole family is going, so you can't skip out) will help the kids keep on track. And let's face the facts - it's not easy to keep fit when you are a parent. So why not find a family fitness center near you?

Hydraulic fitness equipment for your kids

E) Choose hydraulic fitness equipment for your kids. You will normally find these only at fitness centers (another reason to make fitness a family affair) What makes hydraulics special, is that they don't need to be adjusted for each child. The resistance depends on the force exerted. So your 6 year old, who pushes with less intensity, will face less resistance than your 12 year old, who

will face more. This is far superior to weights, where you have to keep adjusting the amount of weight until you get it right.

F) Try circuit training. This is also best done at a fitness center, because circuit training involves a variety of machines, all set up in a circuit. Kids accustomed to computer games, are less likely to be bored by circuit training, because they are constantly on the move from one machine to the other.

G) Sign them up for an organized physical activity, one where they will develop a sense of accomplishment. That sense of accomplishment is the motivation that keeps them going. It does not need to be competitive, but it does need to provide them with goals to work for. For example, sign them up for a dance class where there is a show to practice for at the end of the year. Or a swimming class where they can achieve various levels right up to certified life guard.

H) Don't just sign your kids up for a physical activity. Have them practice it at home...only, don't call it practice. That sounds too much like homework. Ask them instead to show you how good they are. That sounds a lot more like showing off and getting quality attention. (The ask them to show Aunt Penelope and cousin Bart and the next door neighbor and...)

I) Unplug the TV. If you can't limit their watching to an hour a day, limit the days on which you plug it in. Ditto for the computer and any other addictive screen-based electronic gadget.

J) Your kids won't like me for this one, but give your kids more household chores...specifically those that involve physical activity like mowing, raking and vacuuming. Caveat: this means that you will have to find new forms of exercise (but I think we covered that in the chasing your kids around and taking them to a family fitness center.

K) Walk more in real life. Do you take the stairs or the escalators? Well, so do your kids. Take them on the healthy route. Do you park near to a store (where your car will get dinged by other car doors) and deprive your kids and yourself from your rightful walking? Or do you park far away from the store where your car is safe from dents and where your kids and you are safe from inertia.

Oops. That's eleven. Oh well, you get a bonus tip.

So just what is a parent to do? Chase your kids right onto hydraulic fitness equipment at the nearest circuit-training workout gym, give them more fitness-oriented equipment for Christmas (instead of the latest screen-based do-hicky) and have your children get involved in more of the household chores

Article 3

Whatever Happened to Play Time?

The cost of highly structured kids' sport programs

Kids' sport programs are no longer a bit of instruction and skill-building, a lot of fun a few days a week, with maybe a few games with local teams thrown in.

Now most kids' sports programs last several hours a day, almost every day of the week--and almost every week of the year. The level of expectations and competitiveness are high (for both kids and their parents). Skills kids will need later in life (cooperation, consensus building, creative problem solving, relaxing) tend to take a backseat to performance.

Kids are also getting injured earlier, and the injuries are those once only seen in professional athletes, setting kids up for a lifetime of physical problems.

Professionals are increasingly cautioning that kids need to be kids, experiment with lots of different activities, and just play. One recommended resource is the [Positive Coaching Alliance](#), which helps coaches, parents, and communities use sports to teach life lessons.

Article 4

Keep Kids Hydrated

Make sure the drinks keep coming.

Getting kids to drink before, during, and after physical activity is important for their well-being--and your sanity--since dehydration leads to irritability and fatigue as well as headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, and muscle cramps.

The June 2005 issue of the American College of Sports Medicine's *Health & Fitness Journal* reports that kids tend to not drink enough water. In fact, studies suggest that more than half of kids turn up for sports practice already dehydrated.

The journal suggests that sports drinks are a good choice because they contain electrolytes and kids are more willing to drink more of them.

Article 5

Motivating Kids to Keep Exercising

Encourage them by stressing health benefits and self-autonomy

There are two theories on how to motivate people to exercise. The self-determination theory emphasizes attaining future intrinsic goals, such as health and physical fitness; the future time perspective theory emphasizes extrinsic goals, such as physical appearance and attractiveness.

This study evaluated which approach was best in motivating young people to exercise. The 501 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students in the study took part in a PE class where taekwondo exercises were taught. They were randomized to one of eight conditions that varied by type of goal and social context: a future intrinsic goal, a future extrinsic goal, an unspecified future goal, no future goal, and forced or invited participation.

When teachers stressed future goals such as health, and allowed students to decide if they wanted to learn the exercises or not, students liked the exercises better, performed better, and continued to do the exercises for a longer time.

Article 6

Pumping Iron's OK for Kids

Safe, fun, fast--strength training builds bone and calorie-burning muscle

By Paula Rasich, Paula Rasich is a reporter for *Prevention*.

Strength training is gaining credibility among top sports-medicine experts as a quick, safe way for children and teens to build muscle, boost bone strength, avoid overweight, and improve self-confidence.

A recent study of 55 boys and girls in an introductory program found that 20 minutes 2 days a week results in significant gains in muscle strength (*Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, Dec 2002). If your child can participate in group activities and follow instructions, then he's ready, says researcher Avery Faigenbaum, EdD, of the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Strength training can give even overweight kids a chance to shine and sparks an interest at an early age for a lifetime of physical fitness, says Dr. Faigenbaum. Anyone starting a fitness program should be supervised to develop proper form and technique. Be safe: Don't start them at home; sign up for a kids-level strength program at a gym, community center, or school.

Article 7

Play It Safe

This year, 1 in 7 kids will need a doctor for a sports injury. Here's how to beat the odds.

By Denise Brodey, Denise Brodey is a health and fitness writer who lives in New York.

When your child is old enough to put on a numbered jersey and play on a team, your first thought may be pure, unabashed pride. Your second thought should be safety. This year, 20 to 30 million kids between ages 5 and 17 will play organized sports, and about 1 in 7 of them will get hurt badly enough to see a doctor. To protect your child on the field or court, follow this expert advice.

Get the best gear Skip the secondhand store and buy sports equipment that fits well. Ask a salesperson who is very familiar with your child's sport to assist in fitting him. Talk to the coach, too, about how to wear a helmet or a mouth guard so you and your child understand how protective gear helps prevent injury, advises Stephen Rice, MD, PhD, director of sports medicine at the Jersey Shore University Medical Center.

Focus on safety At each practice, coaches or parents should help players put on their gear and correct those who suit up the wrong way. "Kids wear their helmets tipped back on their heads to look cool, but wearing equipment improperly offers little protection," says Rice, who is also a member of the Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness for the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Take practices seriously "During practices, coaches tend to be more lax about safety gear," says Alan Korn, director of public policy for Safe Kids Worldwide in Washington, DC. In fact, 62% of injuries related to organized sports occur during practices, reports the group.

Build their skills Kids who are unfamiliar with a sport are more likely to be hurt, but their risk drops as they learn the game. "As kids improve through practice, they're less likely to get hurt," says Korn. Give your child ample opportunities for skill building and conditioning. Take care not to overdo it, particularly with young children, Rice cautions. Their developing bones may still be weak. Overuse injuries may hurt their joints and could also create conditions that lead to arthritis later in life.

Article 8

Kids on the Run

Get your child to burn calories, boost strength--and still look forward to the next workout.

By Sari N. Harrar, Sari N. Harrar, former health news editor at *Prevention*, is a freelance writer specializing in health, science, and medicine.

Last fall, when Mariah Williams Roberts jogged across a makeshift finish line at Northrich Elementary School in Richardson, TX, it was a stunning achievement: The 10-year-old was completing a marathon. But it wasn't just any marathon. Along with 100,000 other Texas grade-schoolers in a nonprofit exercise program called Marathon Kids; Mariah had walked and run the distance bit by bit, a quarter mile at a time.

"We don't ask kids to run a 26.2-mile marathon in a day," says Kay Morris, founder of Marathon Kids. "Instead, it's done in increments. It might take 6 months--but 86% of our kids finish."

This approach can get *your* youngsters to lace up their sneakers even if they aren't natural athletes. Breaking a big challenge into small, fun ones is the way to breed enthusiasm for walking or running--without tears, boredom, or injury.

Article 9

Get Kids Moving

Exercise has multiple benefits for obese or overweight kids. Because of concerns that dieting could lead to eating disorders, physical activity has been suggested as the better weight loss alternative for obese children and adolescents. But there have been few studies on the effects of exercise on obese children and teens.

This study, reported in *Sports Medicine* (May 2005) reviewed several of the best trials and found that, while exercise may not reduce bodyweight or BMI, it does increase lean and decrease fat body mass. Exercise improves cardiovascular and muscle strength. It also improves endothelial function (the ability of a vessel to contract and dilate properly).

Because these beneficial changes occurred without accompanying changes in blood pressure or blood lipids, it appears that exercise has a direct effect on blood vessels. This is important because poor endothelial function is a risk factor for atherosclerosis.

Article 10

Keeping Girls in the Game

Good news on athletic equality

In February 2003, a commission appointed by the Department of Education recommended changes to the law that could have resulted in limited opportunities for girls to participate in sports.

America spoke up against these changes jeopardizing athletic opportunities for young girls across the US, and with the help of the "Save Title IX" campaign, succeeded in being heard: On July 11, the department's Office for Civil Rights issued a letter to US schools to clarify and enforce the policies of Title IX. Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination by ensuring that schools and colleges receiving federal funds provide equal opportunities for women.

Article 11

Let Them Be Fit

Play games that turn eating right and exercise into family entertainment

By Heather Lee, Heather Lee is a *Prevention* editorial assistant.

These days, it seems like the only exercise kids get is with their thumbs. Wiis and Xboxes have replaced backyard time, and many schools have cut gym class. The antidote to all this childhood inertia? You. "It's up to parents to show their kids how good it feels to get moving," says David L. Katz, MD, an associate professor of public health and director of Yale University's Prevention Research Center.

Studies have shown that when kids see their parents enjoying exercise, they're more likely to want to do it, too. And with children's health at stake, game manufacturers are waking up to the fact that families want fun ways to be active together. We've found ones that will get your entire clan off the couch. The best part? You'll all be having too much fun to realize that you're getting healthy!

Give kids at home what they're missing in school: Only two states (Illinois and Massachusetts) require gym class to be offered in all grades

Article 12

Tips for Kids' Strength Training

Pumping iron is okay for kids ages 7 and up.

According to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), strength training can be safe and effective for most kids ages 7 and up. But learning how to do it right is very important to keep them safe and having fun.

Kids should start with 2, non-consecutive sessions per week during which they do 8 to 12 exercises that work all the major muscle groups. Teach controlled movement and have the kids lift enough weight for 10 to 15 reps per set. Increase loads by 5 percent to 10 percent whenever 15 reps are easy to finish.

To keep kids' interest, introduce medicine balls and resistance bands.

Article 13

Girl-Friendly Gym Class

Girls really do just wanna have fun.

By Selene Yeager, Selene Yeager is a contributing editor to *Prevention*.

When Katie Hanstein was 9, her mother signed her up for soccer for exercise. Unfortunately, the Oklahoma City family's primary activity became battles about going. "The shin guards itched, and it was cold and no fun," says Katie. Then they discovered Pom Tumble Cheer, a studio offering hip-hop dance classes. Katie hasn't stopped moving since.

The Hansteins are on to something. Physical activity among girls plummets 80% as they grow up. But the problem isn't sweat, it's competition: In a University of Georgia study of 2,000 ninth-grade girls, researchers found that when PE programs were girls-only and included step dancing, walking, and tennis volleying (instead of matches), the girls not only enjoyed gym class more, they exercised more outside of school.

"Many girls enjoy being active with other girls, not competing against them," says study author Rod K. Dishman, PhD. Activities that allow them to play without keeping score may keep them active for life.

Article 14

Beat the Heat

Temperature getting high? Keep your child's risk low with these five stay-cool strategies

By Rachelle Vander Schaaf, Rachelle Vander Schaaf, a mother of two, lives in eastern Pennsylvania and writes frequently about children's health.

My 13-year-old, Jordan, had been looking forward to his first backpacking trip? the start of training for an outing in the Rockies. He was ready to hike 13 miles in a day, but he hadn't counted on the effect of the hot sun combined with dehydration from sweating. Instead of enjoying a pack-stove dinner with his pals, Jordan ended his hike overheated and too dizzy and nauseated to leave his tent.

Though disappointed, Jordan was lucky. Resting out of the sun, drinking water and juice, and getting a rubdown with cold towels brought his body temperature under control. The consequences could have been more serious: Hyperthermia, an abnormally high body temperature, can cause painful muscle cramps and may quickly progress from the nausea, fatigue, and headache of heat exhaustion to the disorientation and loss of consciousness that marks heatstroke.

Kids, especially those under 4, are susceptible to high temps for two reasons: They don't dissipate heat through sweating as efficiently as adults do, and they don't always drink enough to replace the fluid they lose in sweat. Children caught up in a game are likely to ignore their thirst--and, unfortunately, supervising adults may fail to remind them: One survey showed that 3 out of 4 parents don't know the steps they should take to keep their kids adequately hydrated.

Like sunburn and bug bites, hyperthermia is a bane of summer that can be prevented, says Jordan MetzI, MD, medical director of the Sports Medicine Institute for Young Athletes at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. Use these tips to keep your kid healthy and in play.

Pour plenty

A recent study revealed that two-thirds of kids at sports camps were dehydrated before exercising. Have your child drink a glass of water before he goes out to play or practice, and make sure he stops periodically to drink, even if he says he isn't thirsty, says Susan Walker Yeargin, coauthor of the study and an instructor at the University of Connecticut's Athletic Training Education Program. Although there are few specific guidelines, she suggests that school-age kids drink about 15 ounces a few hours before exercise and about 5 ounces 10 to 20 minutes before playing outside. No measuring cup handy? Two kid-size gulps equal about an ounce.

Pick the right beverage

Sports drinks tend to be high in sugar, but they may have an edge over plain water if they get youngsters to drink more, says Gregory L. Landry, MD, a professor of pediatrics and sports medicine at the University of Wisconsin Medical School. Another option is to add a splash or two of fruit juice to a glass of water--the flavor encourages children to tank up. Avoid caffeinated drinks, such as iced tea or colas; they have a diuretic effect, causing further fluid loss.

Ease him into exercise

Heat's hardest on a child who's not used to it, says Landry. "Kids need 10 to 14 days for their bodies to adjust to warm weather and as long as 6 weeks if they're out of shape or overweight." Get your child outside to kick a soccer ball or ride a bike for up to 45 minutes a day at least 2 weeks before camp, vacation, or sports practice starts.

Dress her lightly

Clothing should be loose fitting, light colored, and limited to a single layer. Look for high-tech fabrics designed to draw sweat away from the skin and allow it to evaporate.

Watch the weather

Try to limit your child's most intense activity to before noon and after 4 pm, especially on humid days. Hot, heavy air makes it harder to sweat, says Metzl. For more info on how to recognize heat-related problems--and how to help--go to www.prevention.com/kidsandheat.

Article 15

An Hour a Day Keeps Fat Away

With regular physical activity, kids can stay fit and trim.

The June 2005 issue of the *Journal of Pediatrics* published a review of over 300 articles concerning physical activity's effect on the health and behavior of school-age kids. The review resulted in a recommendation that children engage in 60 minutes or more a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity to maintain health and weight. Activities, it said, should be fun and varied.

An editorial in that same issue underscored the challenge of getting kids to move that much. It suggested that as a first step medical and public health practitioners recognize how important physical activity is. Clinicians should urge young patients to move, while communities and schools need to provide safe environments, such as playgrounds, for children.

While professionals can help improve youngsters' health and welfare by taking those steps, parents are kids' primary caretakers and should find ways to keep them active.

Article 16

Spine of the Times

Teen TV viewing is to blame for boom in back pain.

By Liz Neporent, Liz Neporent, a contributing editor to *Prevention* and fitness advisor, is the author of *The Fat-Free Truth*.

Think kids grow up fast these days? Here's proof: A Norwegian study found that nearly 60 percent of 15-year-olds complained of having had chronically achy backs during the preceding year.

Those who planted themselves in front of the TV or computer for 15 hours a week or more were three times as likely to have lower-back pain as their more active counterparts (the average American teen watches 3 hours of telly a day). "They sit with their low back flexed--really hunched over--for hours," explains lead researcher Astrid Noreng Sjolie, PhD, a consultant at the University of Bergen.

Kids who walk or ride their bikes at least 1 mile daily can cut their back pain in half; those activities give still-developing spines a chance to stretch out.

Article 17

Active Kids Are Happier Kids

Playing sports may help ward off depression.

By Selene Yeager, Selene Yeager is a health journalist and author/coauthor of more than two dozen book titles.

Is your child entering junior high soon? Sign her up for a sport now. A study of nearly 4,600 middle-school students found that seventh graders who got even the bare minimum of exercise--20 minutes at least three times a week--had fewer symptoms of depression than those who were less active. The more they moved, the happier they were. Kids who became more active during the 2-year study ended up with more positive moods.

As kids enter middle school, they begin to exercise less and are more prone to depression, says study author Rod K. Dishman, PhD. He recommends boosting physical activity as a first line of defense. "Exercise is cheap, accessible, and has few side effects," he says. "Parents should get involved by planning family activities and encouraging active recreational pastimes to help keep kids in this age group increasingly active."

Article 18

Fun and Games

4 tips to expand your kids' exercise arsenal

By Selene Yeager, Shelley Drozd, and Carol Krucoff, Selene Yeager is a contributing editor to *Prevention* magazine. Shelley Drozd and Carol Krucoff are freelance writers who write regularly about health and fitness.

What can you do to get your kids to learn new activities--and maybe learn to love them, too? Here are a few pointers:

Tune up your gear. Get out all your sports and athletic gear and make sure it's ready to go--especially the things your child likes. "Make sure the tennis racquets are easy to get to, the balls are out, bicycles are in working condition," advises Cindy Zedeck, project director, Stanford Pediatric Weight Control Program.

In with the new. "Keep exposing your child to new sports," advises Zedeck. For children who aren't so big on organized sports such as soccer and baseball, try something a little different, like the martial arts or dance, she says.

Revisit the old. Don't be afraid to give another go at activities your kids didn't like when they were younger, says Zedeck. Sometimes kids' activity preferences change as they get older.

Piggyback your sports. If your kids like one sport in particular, trying out something similar might work for them, says Zedeck. For example, if your child likes tennis, see if they also like badminton, racquetball, or paddle tennis.

Article 19

Ready, Set, Get Fit!

28 ways to get them off the couch

By Selene Yeager, Shelley Drozd, and Carol Krucoff, Selene Yeager is a contributing editor to *Prevention* magazine. Shelley Drozd and Carol Krucoff are freelance writers who write regularly about health and fitness.

In many schools, the growing pressure to excel at the three Rs has squeezed out the equally important fourth R--running around at recess. That means it's your job to steer your kids toward more active fun when they're at home. But how's a parent to compete with the Internet and X-box? Present them with a new kind of "playstation," one that involves running, jumping, and exploring.

"Kids are naturally active, but like adults, it's often easier to sit in front of the TV or the computer," says Mary Gavin, MD, mother of two and senior fellow at KidsHealth, a Wilmington, DE-based nonprofit organization dedicated to children's health. Video and computer games entice kids because they take the guesswork out of playtime. You can do the same by offering them a variety of specific activities that'll keep them moving while they're having fun.

To help, we've compiled a 28-day family fitness planner that will introduce your kids to a wide variety of fun, physical activities. "By trying an assortment of activities, your kids will learn that there's more to 'exercise' than team sports or lifting weights," says Gavin, lead author of *Fit Kids: A Practical Guide to Raising Healthy and Active Children*. "They'll discover active hobbies like dancing and hiking that they can enjoy their whole life."

Just remember, if your children have been very sedentary, take it slow so they can get used to moving their body. "Start with just 10 to 15 minutes, and gradually increase the amount of time," suggests Gavin. "And always keep it fun. Remember there's no pressure to 'perform' here. It's all about enjoyment."

Article 20

The Backyard Workout

How to shape up, burn calories, and bond with the kids all at once.

By Marianne McGinnis, Marianne McGinnis is a former *Prevention* associate editor.

Those dog days of summer can be, well, just a little too relaxing. Even if you get the kids to join you on a walk, they'll likely turn it into a teeth-gritting--"Mom, this is booooring!"--kind of experience. Don't panic. The key to securing a mom-sized workout in a kid-centered world is right in your own backyard, says Michael Sena, a certified fitness specialist and the author of *Lean Mom, Fit Family*.

Turning on the sprinkler and letting the kids run free is great exercise--for them. But parents can get in on the action, too, "by jam-packing their exercise with game-oriented, kid-friendly moves," says Sena, who designed this half-hour circuit routine using balls, jump ropes, and grass. The exercises alternate between combo strength moves and high-intensity, bone-building cardio. "You'll get exercise, and you'll be leading by example," says Sena.

Workout basics After warming up, perform each of the main moves for 3 minutes with a 30-second rest between exercises. Limit this workout to 3 nonconsecutive days a week.

Before and after: Do a 3-minute warm-up and cool-down (running through the sprinkler counts). Or try this: Each of you grabs a Frisbee and walks to opposing sides of the yard. Count to 3, then toss the disc. Catch it (or pick it up), jog to the other side, and repeat.

Article 21

Exercise Trumps Calcium

The best bet for her bones!

By Caroline Bollinger, Caroline Bollinger is *Prevention's* fitness editor.

Girls build six times more bone strength from exercise than from calcium, finds a decade-long study of 80 girls, ages 12 to 22, at Pennsylvania State University and Johns Hopkins University.

"Parents are mistaken if they think the only thing they have to do is get calcium inside their kid," says lead author Tom Lloyd, PhD, a professor of health evaluation sciences at Penn State College of Medicine. "Girls need regular weight-bearing activities like walking, tap dancing, and participation in organized sports.

Thirty minutes at least every other day would be beneficial. Females develop 40 percent of their bone mass between the ages of 12 and 16; they start to lose it in their mid-30s. That means attaining optimal bone mass and strength in adolescence may ultimately ward off osteoporosis. Previous studies, which looked at bone density, had suggested that calcium was key. But Lloyd measured bone strength--now recognized as the more critical measurement.

Article 22

Never Too Early to Move

What kids do may affect their weight more than what they eat.

In order to find out what most affected body mass index (bmi) in youngsters-- diet, physical activity or watching TV--researchers followed a group of 3 to 4 year olds for three years. BMI was taken at the beginning and end of each study year.

They found that higher amounts of physical activity decreased the risk of obesity, while higher amounts of sedentary activity (TV watching) increased the risk. Diet did not appear to have much of an effect. Breaking the results down by age, TV viewing became a significant risk in the third year of the study, suggesting that parents and schools would do well to start focusing on increasing physical activity and decreasing TV time by the age of 6 or 7.

The study appeared in the June 2005 issue of the *International Journal of Obesity*.

Article 23

Now vs. Then

The past may hold the key to unlock our children's physical fitness.

Because restricting calories isn't considered optimal for preventing children from becoming overweight, increasing physical activity becomes the best option for achieving that goal. But despite much research, we still don't know how much activity children really need to be healthy and fit.

One way to find out is to look at activity patterns in children who lived before the "obesity epidemic" began. Without a time machine, the next best thing is to study people who still live an agrarian, nonmechanized lifestyle.

A team of Canadian researchers compared physical activity among old order Mennonite children with that of rural and urban school children who had a more contemporary lifestyle. The Mennonite children got more physical activity per day than the other kids, even though they neither have physical education classes nor play institutionalized sports. They were also leaner and fitter, which verified what most of us know intuitively: Children's level of activity is declining.

The study was reported in the July 2005 issue of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

Article 24

Born to Walk

Help kids do what comes naturally.

By Lori Nudo, Lori Nudo is a freelance writer based in Iowa.

Parents joke that once children learn to walk, they never slow down. The truth is, they do--and sooner than you think.

From the moment kids start school, they spend more time sitting than they do moving about. And exercising their fingers as they play video games, send instant messages, and channel surf in their free hours doesn't help. By the time they're in high school, nearly one-third of students aren't getting the minimum hour of exercise each day considered essential by the National Institutes of Health.

Research shows that inactivity not only contributes to weight gain, future susceptibility to health problems such as diabetes and heart disease, and a lifelong sedentary habit, but it also hurts kids' academic performance.

Children who scored low on a standardized physical fitness assessment tool ranked further down the scale on state achievement tests than did kids who scored high in fitness, report University of Illinois researchers. These findings are preliminary, say the scientists, and their study of 250 elementary schoolers is ongoing, but the data accumulated thus far supports the widely held theory that active bodies foster active minds.

If you want to encourage your kids to exercise more, getting them walking is a good place to begin. "It takes no special skill, ability, or equipment, and it works for all ages," says Mary L. Gavin, MD, a pediatrician at Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, DE.

You'll need to walk more yourself to set the pace as a healthy role model and to create situations in which walking arises naturally, says Kenneth H. Cooper, MD, founder of The Cooper Institute in Dallas and author of *Fit Kids! The Complete Shape-Up Program from Birth through High School*. Here's how you can do both, without ever even mentioning exercise.

Feed gadget love. Kids dig electronic doohickeys, so arm yours with a \$10 pedometer to help her count steps. For an added incentive, log on to The President's Challenge. Youngsters ages 6 to 17 can track daily steps and earn patches and badges.

Take the Walking Bus. Thirty years ago, nearly half of all children walked to school. Today, only about 15 percent do. The Walking Bus program is changing that. Adult volunteers pick up kids on foot and escort them to school, then home again at day's end. To find out more about starting your own "bus," visit The Walking School Bus.

Mix it up. Alternate walking with other activities during your family strolls through the neighborhood. A great boredom reliever for younger kids is to

name every other block according to a different activity, such as Skipping Street or Leapfrog Lane, says Gavin.

Curb the chauffeuring. Don't let teens turn you into a taxi service. The next time your older child asks to go to a friend's house, rent a DVD, or meet buddies at a coffee shop, check the distance. If it's less than 3 miles and safe for walking, hand over your cell phone and tell him to take to his feet. Better yet, walk him halfway.

Make it homework. For many kids, the only time during the week they can be active is during the hours right after school, according to Chuck Corbin, PhD, a member of the science board for the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and author of *Fitness for Life*. Plan an hour of exercise every afternoon as part of your child's daily homework.

Introduction to Team Fitness

Project Description

Provide after school Team Fitness classes for 50 schools in the Milwaukee area. Team Fitness is a program designed by the MCCA to give youth age's 4 to 15 organized fitness instruction. This instruction typically takes place at a school, community center or the local YMCA. Classes are designed to engage participants for 40 to 45 minutes. Each class is tailored to follow a five-stage workout plan that incorporates running, stretching, a strength and condition workout; team activities and health related topics. Each program is eight weeks in length. Teams are divided in to boys and girls teams with a maximum of 25 participants on each team. Team Fitness provides a fundamental foundation for team play and leadership skills by preparing youth for team accountability, individual goal setting and achievement; the importance of group dynamics, competitive organized team play and individual accountability.

Project Staffing

MCCA continues to identify qualified coaches and educators through our partnerships with local universities and schools. Each coach is required to have some coaching or mentoring experience working with urban youth in our age bracket. All coaches are given a background check prior to being considered for hire. Each coach has to complete 10 hours of coach shadowing and be graded on their performance by our three panel committee before taking over their own Team Fitness site. Every two weeks coaches report to the program coordinator on their sites program schedule and productivity. Site visits are conducted both by the team coordinator and contracting agencies randomly to insure service delivery as well as program effectiveness.

Mission Statement

To empower youth, families and communities by creating leadership opportunities that foster accountability, education, employment and service to Milwaukee.

Five Stage Fitness Workout Plan

Each fitness class is designed to give youth a five stage workout plan. Stage one is the team warm-up. This stage consists of running, sprints, high knees and frog jumps. The second stage is the team stretch which is a circuit of 4 different team stretches done three times each. The third stage is the team workout that incorporates 2-4 sets of jumping jacks, push-ups, sit-ups and squats. Stage four is the team activity stage when the class engages in team sports and clinics.

Pre and Post Surveys

Coaches are required to conduct a pre and post survey on each of the youth who participate in the Team Fitness program at each site. These surveys help MCCA measure the impact the class has had on the child's behavior, eating habits, exercise routine, school attendance and over all health education.

Partnerships with Institutions & Organizations

MCCA plans to continue our partnerships with Milwaukee Public Schools, Best Friends, Milwaukee County Boy Scouts, New Beginnings Are Possible and local universities to continue to provide quality services for Milwaukee's youth. The Team Fitness program was offered in 35 schools and community centers in 2008. The average class size for these sites was 15-20 youth. The following organizations had contracted MCCA to perform the Team Fitness program last year:

Organization	#Sites	#Classes	#Sessions
New Beginnings Are Possible	1	2	3 After School
Best Friends	9	15	3 During School
MPS	20	60	1 After School
Helen Bader FND	5	10	1 After School
Totals:	35	87	8

Program Funders

Private Foundations - In 2008 we received private grants through these foundations; Bradley Foundation, Christian Stewardship Foundation, Betty Brinn Foundation, Stackner Foundation and the Helen Bader Foundation.

Corporate Sponsorships - In 2008 our corporate sponsors where; Best Block, Wisconsin Vision, Kenosha Vision Lens Best Corporation and Potawatomi Bingo.

In-Kind - In 2008 the MCCA received in-kind contributions from; Milwaukee Public Schools, Outback Steak House, New Beginnings Are Possible and the Milwaukee County Boy Scouts.

Program Contracts - In 2008 we secured contracts with; Milwaukee Public Schools, Best Friends, Boys & Girls Clubs, Milwaukee County Boy Scouts, Best Friends, Helen Bader Foundation and New Beginnings Are Possible.

Individuals and Fund Raising Events - In 2008 over 1,500 individuals made pledges to assist with programs and services through our fundraising events, which MCCA plans to continue to do this year.

Program Highlights & Benefits

Crime Reduction-The team fitness, weekend adventurers and team league programs are offered during after school hours and over the weekends. Crime is the highest in Milwaukee during these hours because many children are unsupervised. MCCA provides a health alternative by pairing youth up with a Christian coach/mentor to provide instruction, disciple and accountability. Giving youth the chance to channel their energy and release personal tension also makes learning more focused and productive. School principals and after school program directors have commended our programs for helping their team of teachers and tutors provide a better quality of education because pupils are more tentative in class.

Adult Mentoring-Each site has is assigned a responsible adult coach that establishes personal relationships with each student to help facilitate a mentor/mentee relationship. Student began to see the value in this relationship which leads to referrals to other MCCA programs and services offered at outside the school.

Healthy Lifestyles-Educating children about nutrition and healthy life choices at an early age sets that stage for a life time of learning and strong foundation which leads to healthy lifestyles.

Benefits

In 2007 MCCA provided 22 team fitness sites throughout the Milwaukee area. Twelve hundred youth were surveyed to measure the programs effectiveness and the following are the results of those surveys:

95 % of the students had fun in their Team Fitness class

92 % of the participants believe the Reflection topics were helpful

86 % believe Team Fitness helped them build stronger friendships

87 % believe Team Fitness has helped them identify healthier eating habits

96 % said they would like to participate in Team Fitness next year

83 % of the participants expressed interest to join a team sport

76 % said they exercise at home more often

81 % believe the class has given them a reason to stay after school for homework help

5 Stage Workout Plan

Stage 1

Team Warm Up

1. Run/Jog 2 Laps
2. Strait Away Sprints 2 Laps (4 sprints ten to fifteen yards)
3. Skips/High Knees 2 Laps (4 skips/high knees ten to fifteen yards)
4. Frog Jumps 2 Laps (4 frog jumps ten to fifteen yards)

Stage 2

Team Stretching

1. Strait Legs 20 second count 2 sets
2. Standing V (right, left & middle) 20 second count 1 set each
3. Trunk Twist 20 second count 2 sets
4. Seated V (right, left & middle) 20 second count 1 set each

Stage 3

Team Workout

1. Jumping Jacks 15 seconds 2 sets
2. Push Ups 15 seconds 2 sets
3. Sit Ups 15 seconds 2 sets
4. Squats 15 seconds 2 sets

Stage 4

Team Activity

1. Kick Ball 15-20 minutes
2. Relays 15-20 minutes
3. Drills (football, basketball etc...) 15-20 minutes
4. Other Team Activities 15-20 minutes

Stage 5

Team Reflection

1. Tips for healthy eating 5-10 minutes
2. Team Play 5-10 minutes
3. Healthy Foods 5-10 minutes
4. Other health related topics 5-10 minutes