

Get Up and GO!

EXERCISE

Make sure your little tater tot doesn't grow into a couch potato.

Children in the U.S. Today are less fit than they were a generation ago. They show early signs of cardiovascular disease. One in five American children are overweight.

- **What's wrong with just relaxing in front of the TV?**

Of course it's good to relax a little every day. Bodies need relaxation. But bodies are machines that also need exercise every day to keep working well. The less exercise we give our bodies, the less energy we have to do other things we really want to do.

- **Daily physical activity is good for children because it:**

- adds more oxygen into blood, making the heart stronger and healthier.
- helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- helps control weight.
- lowers blood pressure.
- gives a feeling of well-being.
- improves self-image.
- boosts energy.
- releases tension.
- counters anxiety and depression, and increases enthusiasm and optimism.
- teaches good habits for adulthood.

- **How much exercise is enough?**

At least 60 minutes of coordinated large-muscle exercise 5 days per week. Remember - it doesn't need to happen all at once! Try fun activities throughout the day such as jumping rope, running, playing on a jungle gym or swimming.

- **Tips to ensure your child is getting enough exercise:**

- Limit television and video/game watching to less than two hours a day.
- Plan family outings involving walking, cycling, swimming or other recreational activities.
- In the winter, enroll her in an after-school program that includes large-muscle activities
- Walk or bike for short trips rather than drive in a car, if it's safe.
- Enroll him in clubs and lessons for sports that appeal to him.
- Encourage activity immediately after school and before homework.
- Choose fitness-oriented gifts like a hoola hoop, jump rope, or a baseball bat.
- Give him a household chore with an age-appropriate level of physical exertion: raking leaves, scrubbing a floor, mopping, taking out garbage.
- Limit use of restraints to toddler movement like playpens and strollers. They're convenient but restrict activity.
- Set a good example yourself. Make exercise part of your day. Children learn by seeing what their parents do as well as what they say.

- **I'm Bor-r-r-e-d!**

Make a family Bored Jar for times when children want ideas for something to do. First, ask them to write down all the energetic activities they enjoy - one idea per piece of paper - fold them up and put them in a jar. They're ready whenever you hear "I'm bor-r-r-e-d!".