

# How to Motivate Your Child to Be Active



Being active means moving our bodies whenever possible through physical activity and play. Activity is important for good health and is necessary to prevent chronic disease. Here are some ways that you can help motivate your child to be active.

## Make your home play-friendly

Play is spontaneous, child-driven fun. Play is necessary for children's learning as well as their social, cognitive, physical, and emotional development. One of the best things you can do for your child is to ensure they have the time, space, and equipment to play daily.

- Give your children time to play by not scheduling them in too many structured activities.
- Set aside a space in your home for your children to play. Supplies should be easily accessible to your children so they can change activities with little help.
- Make physical activity readily available – make bikes, scooters, balls, skipping ropes easily accessible.

- Have a supply of indoor active games. There are great apps and websites for ideas.

## Participate in family activities

Family activity is necessary for role modeling and to encourage children to be physically active. Research has shown that children are more active when their parents are physically active with them. Children who are active will more likely be active as adults. This is because they have formed healthy habits and have developed confidence in their ability.

The goal for families is to form healthy physical activity habits early on, so that children will have the basic skills necessary to be *active for life*. Try to participate in one family activity per month.

- Choose activities that your children enjoy.
- Look in your municipality's healthy living guide- it often has great family activities!
- Plan family activities with your children – this will help keep them interested.
- Ensure they have an *active start* by allowing them the opportunity to participate in a variety of different activities.

## Reduce screen time

Screen time includes any activity that involves a screen, such as TV, computer, iPad, video games, and smart phones. Screen time should be limited to 2 hours per day for people over the age of 5 years. *Excessive* amounts of screen time can have a negative effect on our health. This is seen regardless of our physical activity, active play levels, body weight, or nutrition.

- Schedule screen-free time for your family – this is a great time to do a family activity.
- Remove TVs, computers, wireless devices and gaming equipment from ALL bedrooms and the kitchen.
- Re-arrange family room furniture so all the couches and chairs do not face the TV.
- No screen time during meals or while doing homework.
- No screen time the hour before going to bed.

## Reduce motorized transportation

Active transport is any form of transportation which involves movement, such as walking or biking. Active transport may be an option for some people to be physically active during their day.

- Walk or bike to school, work, or other activities.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park further away when going to a store or restaurant.

## Stand whenever possible

Some leisure activities fall under the category of sedentary activity as they involve long periods of sitting. Examples include reading, sewing or knitting, doing crafts, or playing word games. Prolonged sitting, even while doing leisure activities, can increase the risk of developing heart disease and diabetes. This increased risk is seen even if there is no increase in weight, waist circumference, or BMI and regardless of physical activity level.

- Stand whenever possible (i.e. when talking on the phone or texting).
- Listen to lively music at home- it will make everyone move more!

## Spend time outdoors

Spending time in nature offers many benefits, such as boosting your immune system and reducing levels of stress and anxiety. Being outdoors also encourages you to move and play.

- Go on a hike
- Fly a kite
- Pick berries
- Build a snowman

