

## KIDS IN MOTION

**B**y the time they reach high school, 64% of children are no longer physically active. Why? If your kids fall within this group, you don't have to sadly shake your head. You can set a good example, be a role model and do the right things so your kids will, too.

Get off the couch and get on a bike with your kids. Introduce them to exercise that's fun. Eat healthy. Instead of high-calorie foods and snacks, turn to fruits and other healthy foods. And once you get kids moving in the direction of fitness, chances are they'll keep going for the rest of their lives.

### Start 'em Young

Becoming a healthy adult starts with being a healthy child. Many chronic diseases of adulthood have their beginnings in childhood. For example, it is important for kids to build strong bones, so that by the time they're in their 20s, their peak bone density will be higher and their risk of osteoporosis will be decreased.

There are also childhood diseases that can easily be prevented by proper diet and physical activity. Children can suffer from diabetes, obesity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure—these aren't just adult ailments.

An hour of physical activity per day is recommended for children. It is also recommended that screen time (TV and computer time) be limited to two hours per day. Children who are fit can avoid the above health problems. They also do better in physical-performance tests. They have a stronger self-image, more self-confidence, less anxiety and stress and they demonstrate greater improvement in skill- and health-related fitness.

When you consider the facts, it makes good sense to encourage physical activity when your children are young. Parents, teachers and fitness professionals all have a role to play. Each can help kids think positively about exercise and motivate them to make regular physical activity a lifetime pursuit.

### Mom and Dad Are the Best Motivators

As a parent, it's up to you to play the biggest part—bigger than a teacher, more important than a fitness professional. Your children look to you for examples on how to talk, dress, act and lead a physically active—or inactive—life.

Set a good example for your kids. Instead of spending the evening in front of the television,



find some activity that will keep you moving. In warm weather, bike outdoors. If it's too cold, get a stationary bike, a treadmill or a trampoline.

And it's never too late or too early to help your kids build strength and endurance. Push-ups and pull-ups are an excellent way to build upper-body strength. Jungle gyms and monkey bars are great for kids because they utilize their own body weight. And they're loads of fun.

Make sure your kids have the proper protective equipment, such as helmets and knee, elbow and wrist pads. Also make sure the athletic equipment they're using is the proper size for them. You wouldn't want to swing a bat as tall as you, so buy equipment to fit each child.

Keep in mind that kids are not always naturally limber and that their muscles may be tight and vulnerable to injury during the growth spurts that occur during the elementary years. Be sure to include stretching as a part of your fitness activities.

Make sure that you concentrate on the positive aspects of exercise. It's a chance for a family to be together, to share good times and have fun. Avoid competition, discipline and embarrassment—things that can turn good times into moments of dread. Praise your children for trying. Encourage their interest in other sports and other activities, which will help them take ownership of their fitness.

### It's Really up to You

You can't tell kids that being active is fun. You have to show them. So take your kids hiking, biking, dancing, sledding, swimming and in-line skating. Skip rope or shoot baskets with them.

Plan outings and activities that involve walking, like a trip to the zoo or the park, a nature trail hike or even a walk through the mall. Remember: If you want your kids to be healthy, happy teens and adults, it's up to you to do something about it.

### Additional Resources

ACE's Guide to Youth Strength Training DVD: [www.acefitness.org/acestore/p-401-aces-guide-to-youth-strength-training.aspx](http://www.acefitness.org/acestore/p-401-aces-guide-to-youth-strength-training.aspx)

American Council on Exercise—*Youth Fitness* by Avery Faigenbaum & Wayne Westcott: [www.acefitness.org/acestore/p-295-youth-fitness-aces-group-fitness-specialty-series.aspx](http://www.acefitness.org/acestore/p-295-youth-fitness-aces-group-fitness-specialty-series.aspx)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Healthy Youth!: [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/index.htm)

American Heart Association—Exercise (Physical Activity) and Children: [www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4596](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4596)

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*If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at [www.acefitness.org/GetFit](http://www.acefitness.org/GetFit) and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts!™*



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