



Encouraging Fitness in Children

1. Make Exercise a Routine – Consistently making exercise part of a routine is important. Traditions involving exercise are a fun way for children to build memories and stay healthy. Walking the dog together every evening, playing catch on Saturday, or being part of a family swim time once a week, are fun, healthy, and memorable experiences for kids.

2. Use Your Feet – Walking is an easy way to get moving and there are many opportunities to increase the number of steps you take in a day. Take the stairs rather than escalators or elevators. Park a little further from the entrance of stores. If restaurants or stores are within walking distance, leave the car at home.



Going Places

3. Leverage Strengths and Interests – Use a child's strengths to identify healthy activities they will enjoy. If a child enjoys more solitary activities, karate, swimming, and running are sports that involve a good deal of independence. Children can work on social skills during these activities but there is more alone time than team sports like soccer and basketball. Certain teams, like traveling soccer leagues, are more competitive than others. If a child is very competitive, they may be happier in a traveling league. If a child is more social, they may be happier in a weekend league. Whatever the activity, try to match the child's strengths with the activity's characteristics.

4. Set Goals – Children like the feeling of reaching a goal. By setting realistic goals like being able to throw a ball back and forth 10 times without dropping it, swimming one length of the pool, or walking Spot four days a week, children stay focused and strive for their goals. To help them stay motivated, set physically realistic goals that can be accomplished in a set timeframe.



Working Together

5. Introduce New Possibilities – As a parent, grandparent, or professional working with children, expose children to new activities through stories, movies, demonstrations, sporting events, or the Olympics. Watching people compete and seeing new possibilities for activities may spark a child's interest.

6. Attend Community Events – Check local papers for t-ball and soccer classes. Communities often have sports programs for children as young as three years old. Team sports are a great way to work on social skills while keeping fit.

7. Be Persistent – Starting something new can be difficult. Encourage children to give new sports a fair chance. If a child goes to the first day of t-ball and does not enjoy it, set a trial period. Let children know people change their minds sometimes and that practicing a skill helps them improve.

8. Be a Role Model – Children learn from the adults around them. If their parents, grandparents, and teachers are active, children will learn the importance of being fit and healthy.

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