



BETTER
KID CARE
PROGRAM



Family Time Work Time

A B A L A N C I N G A C T

BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES

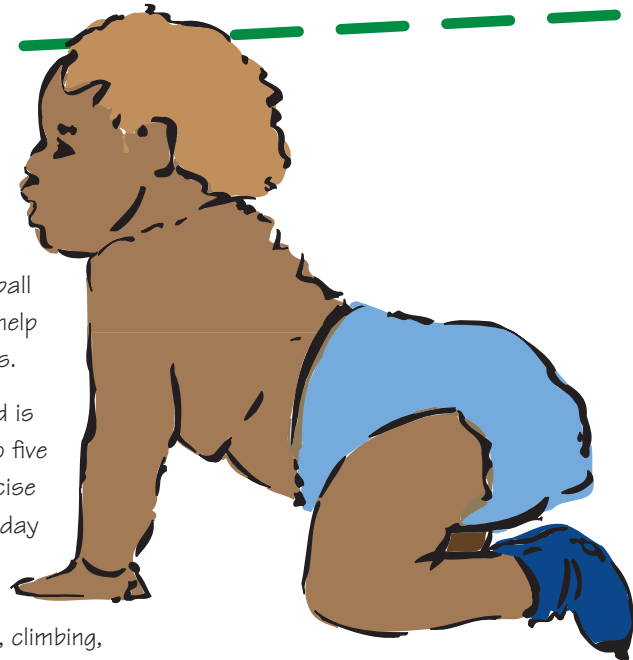
Make Exercise A Habit - Do It Every Day!

Young children need to be active. Be sure your child gets enough physical activity every day. Habits started when children are young follow them into adulthood. Physical fitness can prevent health problems such as heart disease and diabetes later in life. An added benefit: Children behave better when they have lots of chances for active play each day.

As children grow and learn new skills, they need different fitness activities. Here are some examples:

- Provide “tummy time” for your infant. This means placing your baby on the floor in a clean, safe place and giving her chances to move her arms and legs. This will build neck, arm, and leg muscles so she can learn to roll over and crawl.
- Provide sturdy, stable furniture for your baby to hold onto as he learns to stand.

- Once your infant is crawling, allow her to crawl over to a ball or toy. This will help build motor skills.
- Once your child is walking, three to five minutes of exercise several times a day will help your child keep healthy. Walking, climbing, riding bikes, running, dancing, jumping, hopping, skipping, and balancing are all good activities for young children. Play games such as “duck, duck, goose,” “ring-around-a-rosy,” or some music for dancing. Avoid games that have winners and losers. Small children are sensitive to failure and some have a hard time with competition.



- For six- to eight-year-olds, running games such as “tag” and “capture-the-flag” are fun. Walking and riding bikes are good activities. Older children may be ready to begin a team sport. Children who learn to enjoy a sport are more likely to remain active throughout life. Some other benefits of playing a sport are to have fun, enjoy friends, and blow off steam.

Become A Fit Family

Become a fit family by doing things together. This can reduce your risk of developing some health problems, and provide fun family times. You can take walks around the neighborhood. Ride bikes together. Play catch, basketball, baseball, or tennis. You might want to find a place to go swimming together. Work together and get family chores done quickly. Limit television, video games, and computer time. Remember, eating and snacking in front of the television is double trouble because it causes overeating as well as inactivity.

What About Snacks?

Snacks provide much needed energy for children. Make good decisions about snacks for your child. Buy and prepare nutritious food for snacks. Some can be prepared ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator. Some, like bananas, are easy to serve and store. Just peel off the skin for an easy to prepare nutritious snack.

Snack time is a great time to get more fruits and vegetables into your child's diet. Cut up fresh vegetables and serve plain or with a dip or dressing. Offer seasonal fruits. The best drinks are milk and water. Avoid sugary drinks such as soda and juice, which are full of "empty calories" that fill you up, but don't supply nutrients. Teach smart snacking to give your child good habits for a healthy life.

Children are naturally able to tell when they are full. Usually, children will not eat more than their bodies need if they are not distracted when eating.

For this reason it is best to serve snacks when your child is sitting at a table. Avoid serving snacks while your child is watching television or using the computer.

****Please note: Infants and young children can choke easily on some foods, such as nuts, popcorn, fruit seeds or pits, pieces of hot dogs or bacon, and some raw vegetables and fruits such as carrots, celery, apples, and grapes. Using grated or finely chopped foods may reduce the risk of choking. Closely watch young children when they are eating these foods.***



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Sheila Milnes, December 2003, *Parents Count — Approaching Fitness in a Developmental Way and Smart Snacking*, Better Kid Care Program, Penn State University

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