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## Get your Family Moving for Better Health!

About 20 years ago, when MTV, Nickelodeon and Pac Man were just catching on, something big happened: kids started regularly hanging out indoors instead of outdoors. But that's not all. In order to take part in those technology-based pastimes, kids started sitting more and moving less. For awhile, health experts didn't seem to mind until those same kids started stepping on the scales.

The number of overweight youth ages 6-19 has tripled in the last 30 years. As parents continue to watch their children gain weight and become less active, they want to learn more about what they can do about it. Read on for some practical advice, take-action tips and how-to ideas to get your family up, out and moving more – together!

***Why is being physically active so important?*** The benefits of being an active family can last a lifetime. Physical activity helps kids and adults develop strong bones and muscles and maintain a healthy body weight and a positive self-image. Being active also reduces the risk for many preventable diseases and health conditions such as heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, asthma, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and joint problems.

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### FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

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*Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program staff at MSU Extension can answer questions or help you learn more about money management, parent, food, nutrition and health issues. MSU Extension educators integrate university and community resources to provide tools that help families succeed. For more information on FCS programs in Michigan, call your county MSU Extension office. Check the government pages of your phone book for contact information.*

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***Did you know that children are more likely to be active when other family***

***members are active too?*** As parents and caregivers, we can do a lot to help kids become more active. By being good role models, adults can make an impact on kids that will last a lifetime.

Try these suggestions:

- **Be a kid again.** Play catch, jump rope, rollerblade or go for a swim with your kids.
- **Plan a family activity night one night a week.** Give each family member a turn to choose an after-dinner activity that gets everyone moving for at least 30 minutes.
- **Get to work.** Chores count as physical activity too. To get the heart pumping, cut the grass, shovel the snow, vacuum the carpet, walk the dog or rake the leaves.
- **Encourage your kids to sign up for physical education classes and out-of-school sports.** Show your support by attending games and practicing with your child. Better yet, sign up to coach or assistant coach your child's team or to help run drills at practice.
- **Use physical activity-related outings as rewards.** Celebrate achievements by playing miniature golf, visiting a waterslide park or going sledding.
- **Walk or bike to the park instead of driving.** Bikers: don't forget to wear your helmets!
- **Reduce family screen time.** Limit watching TV, surfing the internet or playing video games to less than two hours a day.
- **Move a little more each day.** Take the stairs instead of the elevator, walk to school instead of driving or riding in a car, and ride your bike to the post office or to the store.
- **Focus on fun.** If kids think being active is fun they will be more likely to want to do it.

***How much exercise is enough?*** Kids should be active for at least 60 minutes each day, most days of the week. Whatever they choose to do, it should include exercise that makes the heart beat faster than it normally does.

Being physically active at any age – and every age – is a vital part of living a healthy lifestyle. What you and your family choose to eat is important too. Make your kitchen a healthy eating zone and stock up on fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, skim milk, low-fat cheese and yogurt, beans and lean meats. If parents enjoy eating a variety of healthy foods, chances are their children will too.

For more information on these and other health, food and nutrition, family and parenting, and money management topics, contact the MSU Extension office.

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**References:**

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- ◆ Healthy Kids Healthy Weight: Tips for Families with Kids of all Shapes and Sizes. Available on line at [www.mihealthtools.org/schools](http://www.mihealthtools.org/schools) or [www.emc.cmich.edu/healthyweight](http://www.emc.cmich.edu/healthyweight).
- ◆ National Association for Sport and Physical Education, Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12, 2nd Edition (2004). Available at: [http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=ns\\_children.html](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=ns_children.html)
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