



# Pick Your Path to Health

## Play Sports with Your Kids

Playing sports with your kids is an ideal way to keep the entire family active. If you're trying to fit exercise into your schedule and also spend more time with the family, staying active together will help improve everyone's health and overall quality of life.

Modeling a healthy lifestyle is important, especially because "one in four children are obese," says Verna Simpkins, Director of Membership and Program Initiatives for the Girl Scouts.

The Surgeon General's report on *Physical Activity and Health* finds that:

- More than 60 percent of U.S. adults do not engage in the recommended amount of activity.
- Approximately 25 percent of U.S. adults are not at all active.
- Physical inactivity is more common among:
  - Women than men
  - African American and Hispanic adults than white adults
  - Less affluent than more affluent populations

Your children may be at risk of leading sedentary lives as well.

The Surgeon General's report finds that:

- Nearly half of American youths, aged 12-21 years, are not vigorously active on a regular basis.
- Inactivity among youths is more common among females than males and more common among black females than among white females.
- Participation in all types of physical activity declines strikingly as age or grade in school increases.

But consider this. According to the Surgeon General's report, "Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity."

So working out together is the inspiration everyone in your family needs. Begin by choosing activities that you can do together and that interest both you and your children. If your children are skeptical at first, motivate them. "Give the child some say in selecting the activities," recommends

Simpkins. "Stress the fun and not necessarily the health benefits. It's not gym class. It's fun."

"Many adults had negative experiences in gym classrooms so we have to motivate the adults as well," continues Simpkins. Supporting each other to remain active is your secret formula for better health.

Begin right away by limiting sedentary activities such as watching television and playing video games. You don't have to engage in strenuous exercise to stay healthy. Simple activities that everyone enjoys are the key. Go for a walk in your neighborhood, or go to a school track or park if you prefer. "Walking is the number one recommended sport for endurance," says Simpkins. If your children are too young to walk, they will enjoy the fresh air while riding in the stroller.

Other possibilities to keep you moving:

- Shoot a round of basketball, play tag or touch football, or dance to your favorite music. If you or your children don't especially like team sports, modify the game to make it less competitive.
- Rake leaves, shovel snow, mow the grass, wash the car, or do any other chore that would be more fun if you had some company.
- Consult your local community center for free family services, such as swimming and dance classes.
- Take advantage of any natural resources in your surrounding area. Go bike riding on bike paths through the city, fly a kite in open spaces, or go hiking and bring a picnic basket.

It is well documented that staying physically active improves your health and helps prevent disease. According to the Surgeon General's report, physical activity reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes. Furthermore, it helps maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints, and helps control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce body fat.

To read the Surgeon General's report, visit [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/)

For additional tips on family fitness, go to *99 Tips for Family Fitness Fun* at [www.shapeup.org/publications/99.tips.for.family.fitness.fun/](http://www.shapeup.org/publications/99.tips.for.family.fitness.fun/)

Even if your children participate in sports at school, it is important to provide encouragement and opportunities for physical activity at home.

Staying active together will lead you and your family down a path to better health.

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."*