

# 99 Tips for Family Fitness Fun

## From the National Association for Sport and Physical Education

A commitment to daily physical activity and a balanced diet – including plenty of grains, fruits, vegetables and beverages – is the best investment you and your family can make for better health. Maintaining healthy bodies is not only vital for physical well-being, but for mental and emotional development as well. The following list gives you some new ideas for family fitness fun activities and helps encourage you and your children to enjoy physical fitness as a part of a normal routine in your lives. Children learn by example – if you enjoy and participate regularly in physical activity, so will your children.

### **Getting Started:**

1. Schedule a regular time throughout the week for your family to do a physical activity.
2. Start a log of daily fitness activities and help everyone find something active that makes them feel successful.
3. Adapt all activities to suit those with special needs and preferences.
4. Wear loose fitting clothing to permit freedom of movement and the proper shoes.
5. Be sure to warm up, stay flexible by stretching and cool down following your workout.

### **Tips for the Home:**

6. Designate indoor and outdoor play areas where rolling, climbing, jumping, and tumbling are allowed.
7. Buy toys or equipment that promotes physical activity.
8. Select fitness-oriented gifts with the recipient's skills, interests or needs in mind.
9. Limit time spent doing sedentary activities such as watching television, surfing the net or playing computer games.
10. Use physical activity rather than food as a reward (e.g. family goes in-line skating).
11. Include grandparents, other relatives, and friends whenever possible.
12. Emphasize the importance of having fun and learning: avoid a push "to win."
13. Get off the coach and change the channel manually – or better yet, turn it off!
14. Spend as much time outdoors as possible.

### **Tips for the Kitchen:**

15. "Pack your own" nutritious snacks, drinks, and meals for family outings.
16. Keep fresh fruit and vegetables washed, cut-up, chilled and readily available for post-exercise snacking.
17. Have cold containers of water, juice, sport drinks, soft drinks or other beverages available during and after workouts.
18. Take the family grocery shopping so everyone can learn to read the nutrition labels (find the cereal that offers the most fiber per serving; find the tastiest non-fat cheese).

### **Tips for school:**

19. Talk to the physical education teacher about your child's physical education program and how you can provide support.
20. Encourage your school board to make physical education a priority.
21. Volunteer to help with physical activity events at your child's school.
22. Insist that recess is available daily for elementary school students.
23. Encourage your school physical education teacher to coordinate family evening and weekend activities in the gymnasium or in the school yard.

### **Tips for work:**

24. Stop every hour or two to walk and stretch.
25. Devote a portion of your lunch break to physical activity (e.g., walking).

26. Collect data on dollars spent and days of work lost due to illness related to overweight and/or sedentary lifestyles: diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke, breast cancer and others. Encourage your employer to install facilities and provide incentives to support physical activity.
27. Walk to a co-worker's desk rather than using e-mail.
28. Make plans with a co-worker to go to a gym or participate in a sport on a weekly basis.

**Tips for anywhere:**

29. Pack a lunch for work if it's hard to find restaurants and delis that offer whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
30. Always use the stairs.
31. Carry items properly-such as book bags, groceries, and picnic baskets to build strength.
32. Walk, jog, or skip instead of driving (to and from school, grocery store, library, and park).
33. Make chores YOUR chance to be active.
34. Get off the bus a few stops early and walk.
35. Park the car AS FAR AWAY from the entrance as possible.

**The Great Outdoors:**

36. Discover what free and low-cost physical activity areas are near your home (park, bike trail, hiking trail, tennis court, swimming pool, etc.)
37. Volunteer to help a neighbor (mow lawn, rake leaves, clean up yard).
38. Shovel snow...build a snow sculpture; make snow angels; build a snow house.
39. Dig and plant in the garden...help everyone plant their own vegetables, fruits and flowers.
40. Chop and stack wood.
41. Take a long walk or jog on the beach.
42. Cross country ski around town and into the woods.
43. Use a compass to map out a course-then set out on a walk, jog, or bike hike.
44. Canoe or raft for an entire afternoon.
45. Ice skate for a great winter workout.
46. Skiing always gives the family a lift.
47. Enjoy water exercise activities.
48. Play a game of mixed-age water volleyball.
49. Visit outdoor education centers.
50. Take a nature hike.
51. Go up, up and away with a kite-flying day.
52. Go to a driving range or enjoy a game of miniature golf.
53. Go camping where you can pitch a tent, gather firewood, fish, bike, and walk.
54. Visit farms throughout the year where you can pick your own strawberries, peaches, and apples.
55. Plan cycling trips on safe trails by calling your local bike shop or bike club.

**Yes, in your own backyard:**

56. Run, jog, and walk on a family treasure hunt.
57. Toss around as many different-shaped balls/objects as you can find.
58. Learn to juggle with the entire family.
59. Play "Hit and Go" croquet-hit the ball and run to it-across the whole yard.
60. Count hula-hoop rotations.
61. Jump rope-practice rhythms, rhymes and tricks.
62. Play a "hot potato" game with a Frisbee.
63. Play an action-packed game of badminton...serves from where the birdie drops.
64. Jump on a Pogo stick and count bounces.

65. Build stilts and walk on them to create laughter and exercise. Remember safety with non-slip pads.
66. Ride on a skate board (with knee, wrist and elbow pads and helmets).
67. Play hopscotch and organize a family tournament.
68. Run and dodge in a "Tag and You're it" game.
69. Play traditional and modified backyard sports: basketball, softball, volleyball, tetherball, etc.
70. Practice on inline skates (with knee, wrist and elbow pads and helmets)-go further and get faster each day.
71. Take the family pet for a walk or jog.
72. Wash the car.

**Tips for the neighborhood, community and beyond:**

73. Create your own Olympic events or friendly challenges at a family reunion or neighborhood block party.
74. Organize a family swim outing-be sure to swim with a buddy in supervised areas.
75. Enjoy a weekend afternoon of physical activities at a local community center.
76. Plan a walkie talkie (walk and talk) with a friend with preplanned topics.
77. Walk or bike to a nearby playground-challenge family members to try their skills swinging, and crossing a horizontal ladder.
78. Take a historical (or architectural) walk or cycling tour.
79. Plan a "block fitness festival."
80. Adopt a highway, park, or beach, and keep it clean.
81. Participate in a "volksmarch." It's German for a "people's walk," is social in nature, and usually 10 kilometers (6.2 miles).
82. Help organize mall walks-especially in bad weather.
83. Research and build a new community exercise opportunity.
84. Enter a "Fun Run" or "Bile-a-Thon."
85. Create or build a fitness trail or par course for the community.

**Take advantage of facilities in your neighborhood:**

86. Check out the facilities at the local Y, health club, park or recreation center.
87. Organize a party at an indoor ice or roller skating rink.
88. Walk to tennis court and play!
89. Participate in a mixed-age martial arts class.

**On rainy days or when stormy weather keeps you indoors don't be Stuck-Liven UP! Music makes it easy!**

90. Create a family video of exercise routines.
91. Invite friends and neighbors over for some country western line dancing.
92. Invent a new dance and name it after your family.
93. Dance to three songs on the radio.
94. Share dances from each generation in your family.
95. Throw an ethnic/multi-cultural dance party.

**Take advantage of what you've got around the house:**

96. Use a bench or steps for step-aerobic workout.
97. Practice safe balance and stunts during TV commercials.
98. Encourage everyone to "act out" a story as you read it.
99. Build an obstacle course in the basement or garage on a rainy day.