

# Keeping kids active during the summer

The lazy days of summer vacation are fast approaching. How do you plan to keep your kids active this summer? How will you combat the temptation to laze away the summer indoors, consuming inordinate amounts of junk food? It is possible to keep kids active during the summer, but it does take forethought from parents to incorporate physical activity into family life.

Summer should be a relaxing time, yet children still need structure and consistency. Despite all protests, youth benefit from maintaining regular "summer" wake-up and bedtime hours. This keeps the internal clock on schedule and in tune with the rest of the world. It is important to limit sedentary activities such as watching TV, surfing the Internet and playing video games.

Without the school bell to indicate snack breaks, it is easy to graze and snack in the kitchen all day long. Easy — and dangerous. Parents should monitor the snacks and meals kids eat during the summer. If possible, set general meal and snack times and let your child know that you will be adhering to these times.

Childhood obesity is on the rise in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day for children and adolescents. It is also recommended to limit sedentary time to no more than two hours daily. Role modeling an active lifestyle is a great way to motivate your children. Make physical

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activity a part of your family's daily routine. If they see you active every day, they come to believe this is the only way to live.

Summer evenings are great times for family activities. While it may be tempting to sit in front of the television or computer after dinner, doing something active together as a family will help your children develop healthy habits that will last them a lifetime. Taking walks in your neighborhood with your kids is a great way to start — spend some family time together and get moving.

Do you enjoy tennis, soccer, gardening or yoga? Consider including your children in these activities, too. Encourage your child's interests and help him or her find a fun and active way to explore them. Does your child like to dance or listen to music? Turn up the radio and dance around the house together, or play games like freeze dance. Other activities can include:

- Games like tag and hide

and seek

- Swimming at your neighborhood pool or beach
- Bike riding
- Hiking
- Jump rope
- Walking your dog
- Summer sports teams

After-school programs and summer day camps are a great resource for parents.

The schedule helps provide structure, and the activities keep kids engaged and active during the summer. This will give your child an opportunity to stay active and avoid negative behaviors that usually result from boredom and lack of structure.

Incorporating healthy activities during the summer will make it easier to keep

your children active and healthy all year long. In turn, this will allow your child to have enough energy during the day to be active, enough rest at night for the next day and the sense of security and consistency that helps them thrive.

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Call Vista Community Clinic's Health Promotion Center at 760-407-1220, ext. 140.

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