

Family Fitness

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The new school year has crept up, which means less downtime for kids and more stress for parents. To make matters worse, cutbacks in physical education, increased academic pressures, and large portion sizes in restaurants and at home are making families increasingly overweight. But who says you can't make more time for the family and squeeze in a decent workout? The trick is to do both at the same time.

Try these strategies to get your family moving – this fall and all year-round:

- Start young. Parents need to get kids moving early in life to promote healthy development and keep sedentary habits at bay. Even your toddler needs at least 30 minutes of structured physical activity every day and should not sit still for more than an hour at a time.
- Set realistic goals. Not all children are star athletes, but keep in mind that your child may have never been given the chance to shine. You can help by being realistic about your child's physical

ability. For some kids, even a jog around the block can seem intimidating. Running ability is mostly mental, so keep your child motivated by breaking down each goal, step by step.

- Get animated. Running doesn't have to be boring! Get creative with your workout. Form a conga line and play follow the leader. Flap your arms whenever you see a stop sign. Try running while hopping, pumping your arms, playing air guitar — whatever you and your kids can dream up!
- Be a cheerleader. A recent study of 200 students in grades 2 through 11 showed that kids of all ages want their parents to help them stay active. Cheer them on frequently and show your child that activity is a priority every day. Also make sure your children know that you would never be disappointed with their performance.
- Use community resources. Your family run doesn't have to be confined to your block. Keep it interesting by visiting different parks or neighborhoods other than your own. You can also check out whether your child's school or a local university or community center offers an indoor or outdoor track for public use.
- Be vigilant. Although a family jog provides a convenient way for you to get out the door and run, the advantages don't come without risks to your child. Try to avoid running at night when visibility is limited. Also, leave distractions at home —including the iPod and the dog. Make this time simply about you and your kin!

Check out this video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o757nQ8uFhY>