

How Can I Encourage My Kids to be More Active?

Make fitness a family affair

by Holly Case

Q. With spring just around the corner, I want to make sure my kids—who have been couch potatoes playing video games all winter—get outside to regularly exercise and play in the nice weather. Any tips to encourage them to be more physically active and healthy?

~ Trudy N., Saginaw

“You have to lead by example,” says Dr. Dan Kehres of Kehres Health and Chiropractic in Saginaw Township. “If the parents are outside exercising, the kids will want to do so as well.”

Inactivity is a nationwide problem, affecting children and adults alike. In the midst of busy schedules, it can be difficult to make time for exercise. “If parents are active, kids will be, too,” says Kehres. “Likewise, if you do not exercise, you cannot expect your kids to do anything different.”

The health consequences of too little exercise can be significant. “Currently, 60 percent of the population is obese or overweight,” says Kehres. Asthma, type 2 diabetes, and heart

disease are all linked to obesity. “If something isn’t changed, today’s babies will suffer from diseases that once only affected much older people.”

Fortunately, these serious diseases are mostly preventable by adopting healthier lifestyle habits, and developing a family exercise habit does not have to feel like a chore.

“Being active as a family has so many benefits. It feels good to see your spouse and kids get healthy. Spending the time together builds better relationships,” says Kehres.

Although families today are busy, the benefits of physical activity are worth the time investment for you and your kids. “Regular exercise can help your body fight stress and prevent illness,” says Kehres. “Outdoor exercise also provides a natural source of vitamin D, a nutrient many people are lacking.”

Exercise doesn’t necessarily have to mean hitting the gym, either. “So many activities are fun for a family. Walking, hiking, mountain biking, and even playing soccer are great ways

to get moving,” says Kehres. “Michigan has so many options for outdoor activities, even in the winter.”

“Kids will do what their parents do,” says Kehres. “By making fitness a fun time you spend with your child, you also create good habits they’ll keep for the rest of their lives.”

If you make a commitment to be fit and active as a family, it will soon become an important part of your family life all year long. ●

Ask a family health or wellness question!

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