

Encouraging kids to be active

By Raising Children Network

Kids will jump at the chance to be active, especially if they know they'll have fun. Offering them a variety of activities is one way to help them enjoy staying fit.

Try these tips for helping your child enjoy being active:

- [Be active yourself](#) – yes, be a good role model.
- Give your child positive feedback and be [supportive](#) when he's finding an activity difficult.
- Spend active time with your child – walking, cycling and playing frisbee are all great fun.
- Help your child find activities that he likes.
- Encourage him to play [outside](#).
- Encourage him to take up an organised sport or group lessons in swimming or dancing.
- Combine moderate activity with vigorous activity.
- Encourage your child to regularly play active games, and praise him when he does.
- Organise family activities such as camping, bushwalking and outdoor games.
- Walk your child to and from child care, kinder or school.
- Walk short distances together instead of taking the car.
- Involve your child in physical activities around the house, such as gardening, washing the car and cleaning.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends watching TV or using the computer – no more than two hours a day and preferably less than 30 minutes a day.
- Keep a box at home and in the car with balls, frisbee, kite, beach bucket and spade so that you're always prepared.
- Give gifts such as balls and bikes to promote physical activity.

Finding enjoyable activities

Try lots of different things to find something your child enjoys and is good at.



Helping kids find activities that they like is one of the keys to keeping them active. Dancing, skipping, running, playing ball, horse riding, flying a kite – it doesn't matter what the activity is, as long as they like it.

Children who are good at balancing may like and do well at dance or gymnastics, for instance, while others with good hand-to-eye coordination might have a talent for cricket or tennis.

Trying out different activities means your child will:

- pick up new skills
- stay interested and challenged
- get enough exercise.

Variety means a mix of sports and activities, and a mix of moderate and vigorous activities. Moderate activities include things like bike riding, climbing and other active play. Vigorous activities that get your child's heart pumping are things like swimming, running and dancing; and team sports like netball, soccer and football.

Kids are often really active only in bursts of a few minutes or less, even during low-intensity [active play](#). Young children are rarely vigorously active for long periods, but will often have bursts of activity for a few minutes or less. This is healthy, and should be encouraged.

Walking

There's no need to run a marathon. One of the easiest ways to incorporate activity into your child's routine is to take regular walks together. You can walk to school, child care or kinder.

You can even start when your child is a baby. Young babies can go on outings in a sling, carrier or pram. As they become toddlers, encourage them to walk some of the way. You can tailor the route (look for parks along the way) and the length of time spent walking to your child's age – allow around 1 km per birthday. That is, a three-year-old can walk up to 3 km, with rest breaks.

Walking to school every day has many benefits for children, parents and communities, including:

- improved fitness of parents and children
- maintenance of a healthy weight
- the opportunity to learn and practice road rules and road safety
- increased awareness of surroundings and involvement in the neighbourhood
- improved observation skills – when children who walk to school draw pictures of their journey they tend to draw people and things from the environment; kids who are driven to school draw cars
- children and parents can talk and spend time together
- social opportunities, such as meeting neighbours along the route and chatting with other parents at the school gate.

You can expand the range of the walks by following nature trails in parks and by taking trips to interesting locations. If your child is really resistant to walking, you could even think about getting a [pet dog](#) for incentive.

Rated ★★★★★ (4 ratings)

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