

Get Active in Nature

Family Physical Activity Plan

In order for your family to become more active it is important to plan ahead. The more sensible and well thought out the plan the better your chance of succeeding at it. Below are some points to consider as you prepare your action plan:

1. *Take a look at what your family is currently doing.*

What physical activities do you include in your day together as a family already?

How much time would you spend being active together? (how many minutes at a time)?

How often (how many days a week or a month)?

2. *When do you like to be active?*

Do you prefer mornings, lunch hour, after work or evenings?

When are you together as a family (before dinner, after dinner, weekends)?

Do you combine your physical activity between individual activities and family activities?

3. *What types of activities do you enjoy doing?*

Can you do these activities more often, more intensely, and for longer periods of time? If you enjoy an activity, it is more likely you will keep doing it. Physical activity should be a positive time. It can be a time to relax, socialize, work off your stress, or just to play.

Are there certain family members, friends and neighbours that enjoy doing one activity that others don't? Split it up. Break off into groups, be active at the same time but do what you like, ie. if Betty and Bob like running while Jake and Sarah like yoga, choose a time for you all to be active and split up into groups, one goes running while the other does yoga.

4. *Are your activities varied?*

Incorporate aerobic activities that work your heart and lungs as well as muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups.

- Moderate to vigorous aerobic activities for 2.5 hours a week. These activities make you breathe harder and sweat (swimming, bicycling, brisk walking or jogging, cross country skiing or snow shoeing).
- Strength activities 2 days a week. These activities involve pushing, pulling and lifting against resistance (lifting weights, yoga, lunges, squats, push ups).
- Flexibility and balance activities. These activities help improve balance and coordination and become more important as you age. (stretching, yoga, tai-chi).

Remember that there are many activities that can fit into more than one of these categories. For example, taking a walk, carrying light hand weights and doing some light stretches after your walk is an easy way to incorporate all three activities.

5. How can your family support and encourage each others efforts to be more physically active?

- Make a family pact that everyone signs
- Discuss as a family some helpful positive ways to encourage each other to be more active
 - Give each other compliments on how well you are doing.
 - Give each other positive reasons to stay motivated when you are feeling sluggish or need some encouragement.
 - Ask each other what you are doing each day and what you plan to do tomorrow.
 - Discuss your goals and how you are going to reach them. Keep your goals positive like feeling better, getting stronger, walking further or longer. Avoid talking about appearances or weight as these can have a negative impact on how you and other family members feel about their bodies.
- Let people close to you know what your goal is so that they can help support you along the way.
- Are there friends and family that have similar goals? Is there a person that can be a buddy so you can encourage each other to take the time for your activities? Having more than one buddy helps in case one buddy gets sick or is not available when you are.

6. Do you have a back up plan?

- Have a plan ready for poor weather or scheduling conflicts.
- Make alternative plans with your family (if it is too icy to walk, plan on doing a workout video at home, or meet at the mall to walk).
- Have an emergency **FIT KIT** in the car, at the office or at home so that you can take advantage of any time that may come along unexpectedly.

Ideas for FIT KIT contents:

- Running shoes
- Clothing for indoor or outdoor activities
- A towel, and a wash kit (baby wipes are a great way to refresh after your workout if a shower is not available)
- Hat, mitts, neck warmer and layers for the winter
- Water and a snack (e.g., granola bars, fruit, almonds, cheese and crackers)
- Sunscreen

7. Keep it real and start small.

The first thing to consider is how realistic your health goals are. Trying to completely change your habits overnight can be overwhelming and lead to frustration and disappointment. Your goal should be something you can reach towards over the course of the year so that you do not set yourself up for disappointment. You can't say "I will walk 10km every morning" if you rarely walk, and hate getting up early. It is not realistic and you won't be able to stick to it. Instead start with "I will walk for 15 minutes at lunch twice a week". Then work up to longer time, more often, different and more challenging activities. It is easier to make one small change at a time, and once that becomes a habit, make another small change.

Some examples of goals to start include:

- I will park further from the door and walk
- I will take the stairs instead of the elevator
- I will take a walking break instead of a coffee break
- I will play actively with my children

- I will walk my dog for 10 minutes after dinner
- I will stretch for five minutes before going to bed or first thing in the morning
- I will do 10 minutes of yoga 3 times a week
- I will do 10 sit ups and 5 push ups before dinner 3 times a week

Once you reach your goals you can then set new goals and gradually increase your amount, time, intensity and frequency.

8. Keep things positive including how you see yourself and your family members.

- This is a positive and very important change for your health so be proud of that and remember that this is an opportunity for you to look forward in a positive way. Take some time to write down some of the positive things you have in your life in other areas. Be thankful for what you have and be proud of your accomplishments to keep your attitude positive and give yourself the support and encouragement you deserve.
- Encourage your family members by:
 - Speaking positively about yourself and family members
 - Speaking positively about your bodies
 - Congratulating them on each of their efforts and accomplishments
 - Discussing your struggles and how you managed to work through them
 - Focusing on why it is important to live an active healthy lifestyle
- Focus on what you and your family have done instead of what your family hasn't done.

9. Physical activity is important, but it is only part of the picture.

- Consider what you are eating and how you are fuelling your body for these activities. Are there ways you could improve your nutrition?
- Make your own healthy eating plan to see if you are meeting your body's daily requirements. www.healthunit.org/nutrition/default.htm



For more information call
 the **Health ACTION Line** 1-800-660-5853
 or visit www.healthunit.org

