



Blue Sky Pediatrics Asheville

Making every Child's day brighter by.....
encouraging exercise and physical fitness.

Newsletter

WHY IS EXERCISE IMPORTANT FOR MY CHILD?

Like adults, kids need exercise. Most children (age 2 and older) need at least an hour of physical activity every day. Regular exercise helps children feel less stressed, feel better about themselves, feel more ready to learn in school, keep a healthy weight, build and keep healthy bones, muscles and joints, and sleep better at night. Increased physical activity has been associated with an increased life expectancy and decreased risk of cardiovascular disease. Inactive children are likely to become inactive adults which increases your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and some kinds of cancer. Parents should try to be role models for active lifestyles and provide children with opportunities for increased physical activity. Exercising together can be fun for everyone. As kids spend more time watching TV, they spend less time running and playing. Parents should limit TV, video game time and computer time.



WHAT TYPE OF FITNESS SHOULD THEY BE DOING?

There are three elements of fitness: Endurance (run away from the kid who's "it"), strength (cross the monkey bars), and flexibility (bend down to tie their shoes). Parents should encourage their kids to do a variety of activities so that they can work on all three elements. Endurance is developed when kids regularly engage in aerobic activity. When done regularly and for extended periods of time, aerobic activity strengthens the heart and improves the body's ability to deliver oxygen to all of its cells. Some examples of aerobic exercises your child can do are basketball, bicycling, soccer, swimming, tennis, walking, jogging, and running. Improving strength doesn't have to mean lifting weights. Any weightlifting should be done under the supervision of an experienced adult who works with them. Most kids just need to do other forms of getting strong such as push-ups, stomach crunches, pull-ups and other exercises to help tone and strengthen their muscles. Kids can also get stronger when they play by climbing, doing a handstand, or wrestling. To improve flexibility, stretching exercises allow muscles and joints to bend and move easily. Kids look for opportunities every day to stretch when they try to get a toy just out of reach, practice a split, or do a cartwheel. The percentage of overweight and obese kids and teens has more than doubled in the past 30 years. A big part of this is due to kids sitting around a lot more than they used to. Today, the average kids spends 7 hours per day on all screen media combined (TV, videos, computers and video games). Kids age 8-18 watch an average of 4.5 hours of television a day. One of the best ways to get kids to be more active is to limit the amount of time spent in sedentary activities. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends these limits on screen time: kids under age 2 should watch no TV at all, kids older than 2 should be restricted to just 1-2 hours a day of quality programming.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD TO BE MORE ACTIVE?



We've talked about why exercise is important for your child, here are some ideas on how you can get your child to be more active and improve your total family fitness. Make time to play by setting aside 30 minutes three times a week to do fun exercises with your kids. Make it a part of your after-school or after-dinner routine. If your kids are young, they might enjoy hopscotch or hide-and-seek. Kick a soccer ball around with older children. Also plan at least one family activity every weekend. It can be as simple as taking the little ones to the playground or as challenging as an all-day hike with your teenager. Walk or bike everywhere that you can. Go for a 30-minute family walk after dinner instead of heading right for the TV. You can make walking fun by tracking everyone's mileage or steps with a pedometer. You can use a family exercise log or colorful stickers to track your progress and as a reminder to keep up the good effort together. Take advantage of any large gathering of kids as an opportunity to play a team sport. Set aside time for household chores and do them together as a family. Play music as you clean and take turns choosing favorite songs. Younger children can help out by picking up toys and sweeping floors while dancing with the broom. Older kids can dust, vacuum and help make beds. Enjoy seasonal

yard work together. Younger children can help plant and tend a garden. Older kids can rake leaves into a pile and then jump in it! Make snow shoveling fun for all by building a snow fort or creating a family of snow people.

KEEP IT SAFE

Before beginning any sport or fitness program, it's a good idea for your child to have a physical examination to make sure there are no undiagnosed medical conditions, vision or hearing problems, or other disorders.