

## Fitness for Children

Parents, teachers and fitness professionals all have a role to play in promoting physical fitness among children. However, the parents' role is the most important. Children model their parents' behavior, so parents must be physically active too. So, what can parents do to promote physical activity among their children?

- Plan family exercise activities so that parents and children can exercise together and have fun! For example:
  - Take walks (in the mall, at zoo, with family pet)
  - Go on bike rides and nature hikes
  - Run races
  - Jump rope
  - Play games
  - Go swimming in the summer and ice skating in the winter
  - Create an obstacle course in the back yard
  - Make sure family activities are fun and not overly competitive. Give children lots of praise and reinforcement.
- Let children help plan family activities. They will feel more invested in the activity and will likely enjoy it more. When physical activity is fun, children are more likely to become active and stay active.
- Because children's bones and muscles are still developing during the elementary school years, be sure that fitness activities include time for stretching.
- Always remember to take safety precautions such as wearing a helmet when biking and putting on sunscreen when swimming in the summer sun.
- If television viewing is a concern, try this simple equation where children earn their television time: 1 hour of reading/studying – ½ hour of TV or 1 hour of active play = ½ hour of TV

Have fun and get fit as a family!

Compiled from [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org) and [www.fitnessforyouth.umich.edu](http://www.fitnessforyouth.umich.edu)