

# Get Them Moving... Physical Activity for Children and Teens.



**H**abits develop early in life. One of the best habits we can help our children develop is daily physical activity. Not just sports like soccer, basketball, or baseball, but activities such as outdoor play, walking to the store, or riding a bike. Too many children spend a large amount of time in front of a TV, computer, or playing video games. Parents and care givers need to encourage children to do daily physical activity. The benefits of physical activity include a decreased risk of chronic disease, improved physical development, and a feeling of well-being. Regular activity will also help children maintain a healthy weight. Most important, being physically active early in life helps to develop a lifelong commitment to being active.

## Exercise Guidelines for Youngsters

Children should be active for 30 to 60 minutes almost every day. Just like adults, they do not need to get all of this activity at once. In fact, children are usually active in short bursts. Total active time for the day should add up to at least 30 to 60 minutes.

As children get older and move into their preteen and teen years, the intensity and duration may increase. Ideally, the activity should last for 20 minutes without stopping a minimum of 3 or 4 days a week. Unfortunately, as girls become teenagers their activity usually decreases. They may need special encouragement. Activities such as walking, basketball, tennis, swimming laps, soccer, dancing, biking and skating are all good choices.

## Promote Physical Activity

Physical activity is FUN! Children at play are living proof of this. Remember when we were children. We didn't want to come inside at the end of the day; we were busy having fun! The love

of activity must be passed down to the next generation. The best way for us to get young people to be physically active is to be good role models and to be physically active ourselves. If parents and care givers enjoy being active, children are more likely to enjoy it as well.

Family involvement is very important. Help everyone stay active. Decrease how much time the family spends watching TV, playing video games or working on the computer. Do something active together instead. An additional benefit may be improved family relationships.

Healthy eating goes hand in hand with physical activity to promote a life time of health and well-being.

### Tips to Get the Family Moving

- ◆ Help everyone to find something active that makes them feel successful.
- ◆ Use physical activity rather than food as a reward: for example, "After you clean your room we can go to the park."
- ◆ Spend as much time as possible outdoors.
- ◆ Encourage your school board to make physical education a priority.
- ◆ If it's possible and safe, walk instead of drive to and from school, the grocery store, a park, the library, etc.
- ◆ Learn what free and low-cost physical activity areas are located near your home, for example, parks, hiking trails, bike trails, swimming pools, tennis courts, etc.
- ◆ Rake leaves...and then jump in them!

◆ Visit farms throughout the year where you can pick your own strawberries, peaches, or apples.

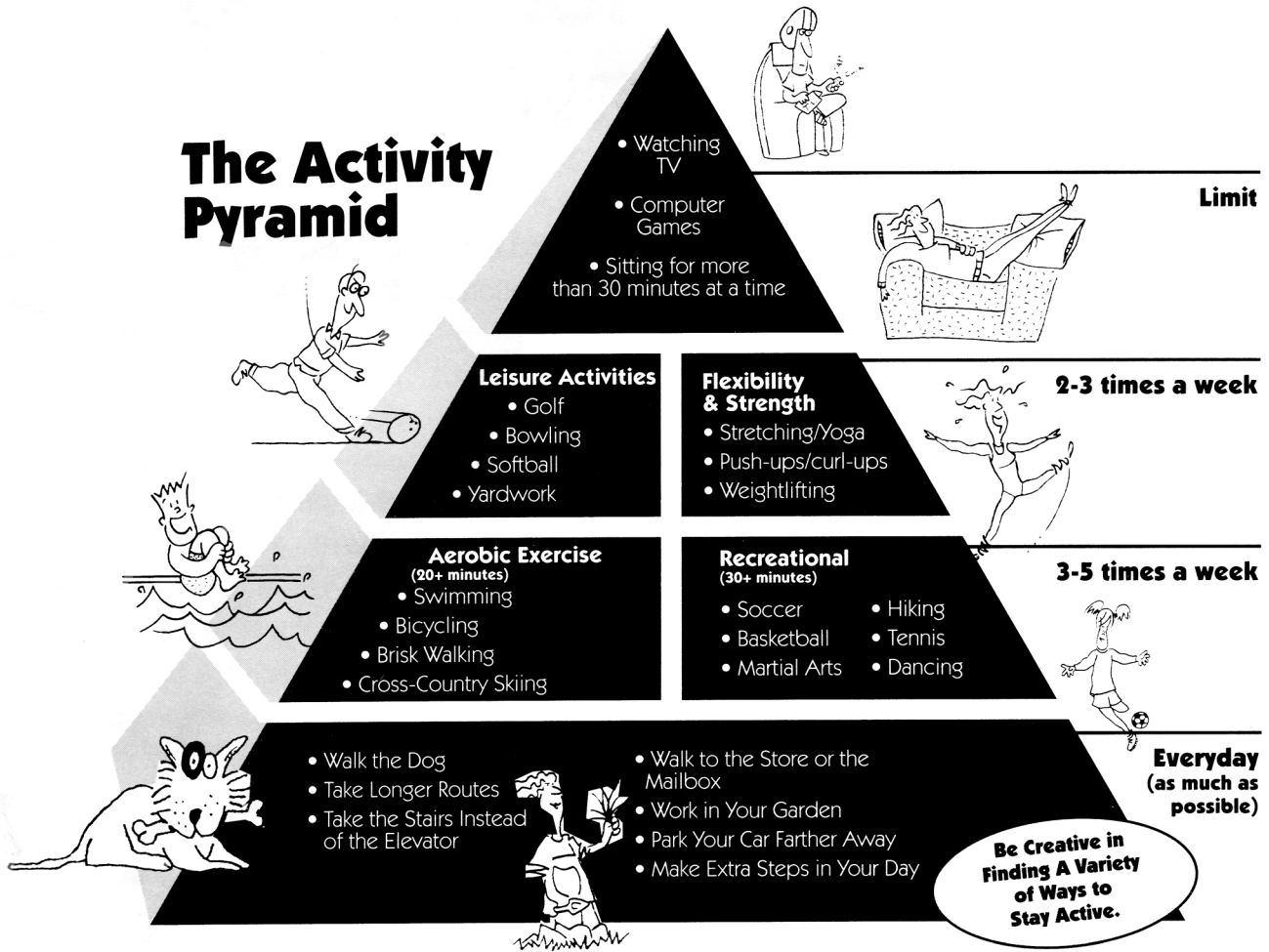
- ◆ Take the family pet for a walk.
- ◆ Invent a new dance and name it after the family.
- ◆ Play twister or other indoor active games.
- ◆ Get everyone to act out a story as you read it.

These are just a few ideas -- check out the Activity Pyramid on the back for more.

### Additional Reminders

- ◆ Be sure your child is drinking enough fluids before, during, and after physical activity.
- ◆ Always use appropriate safety equipment, especially helmet for bike riding, skateboarding, and skating.
- ◆ Ensure adult supervision where needed, especially activities in or near water.

# The Activity Pyramid



*If you have diabetes, heart disease or other chronic diseases, talk with your doctor about the right exercise program for you.*