



Fitness as a Family Priority

In addition to improving overall health, physical activity is a fun outlet for enhancing family bonding and establishing deeper relationships among family members. As role models, parents can have a major impact by establishing a positive outlook toward childhood physical activity that may carry forward into adolescence and adulthood.



Guidelines for Youth Fitness

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that all youth participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity aerobic physical activities each day. Moderate and vigorous activities include walking, bicycling, hiking, and active games that involve running or chasing such as tag and hide-and-seek. Muscle- and bone-strengthening activities (such as gymnastics, jumping rope, and running) should be included at least three days each week as a part of the 60-minute recommendation. A child participating in fun, age-appropriate activities has an increased likelihood of remaining committed to an active lifestyle.

“I enjoy being active with my family, whether it’s competing together in a triathlon, boogie boarding at the beach, or just playing catch outside.

It’s a fun way to combine family time and fitness.”

— Hannah, age 16

Resources for Family Physical Activity

Climb Nashville: <http://climbnashville.com/>

Rails to Trails Conservancy: www.railstotrails.org/

Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association: www.trpa.net/

Discovery Center: www.discoverycenteronline.org/

Nashville Zoo: www.nashvillezoo.org/

Friends of Percy Warner Park/Edwin Warner Park: www.friendsofwarnerparks.com/

Tennessee Disc Golf: www.discgolfdirectory.com/tennessee.php

Harpeth Bicycle Club: www.harpethbikeclub.com/

Nashville Striders: www.nashvillestriders.com/

Girls on the Run: www.girlsontherun.org/

Tennessee State Parks: www.tn.gov/environment/parks/

American Volkssport Association: www.ava.org/

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Be Active, Healthy, and Happy:

Exploring Fitness as a Family Affair

Families that Play Together, Stay Together

- Set a good example by modeling a physically active lifestyle for your children. Make time to participate in physical activities everyone in the family can enjoy.
- Learn what your children want from physical activity programs. Help them choose activities that are fun and age appropriate.
- Consider enrolling your child in structured physical activities that have reasonable time commitments.
- Explore new opportunities for physical activity through your local parks and recreation department.
- Volunteer to help with your child's sports teams and recreation programs.
- Reduce television and computer use and increase "outside time."
- Assign active household duties to all family members (e.g., vacuuming, washing the car, mowing the lawn).

Linking Physical Activity and Health

Although health conditions such as heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes typically appear during adulthood, clinical evidence suggests that their genesis occurs in childhood.¹⁻⁶ Public health efforts aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles in youth can lower the risk of premature morbidity and mortality later in life. Since regular physical activity has been shown to decrease many chronic disease risk factors in children,⁷ developing and maintaining adequate levels of physical activity and fitness early in life may play a key role in the development and maintenance of good health.

Physical Activity in Youth

Data contained in the 2007 Tennessee Coordinated School Health Report⁸ indicate that 50% and 60% of Tennessee middle school and high school students, respectively, failed to attain the daily recommended levels of vigorous physical activity. Even more discouraging is that about 70% of all middle and high school students in Tennessee reported that they did not attend physical education classes daily. From a national perspective, the lack of physical activity in American youth has contributed to higher rates of obesity in U.S. children. Since the mid-1970s, the prevalence of childhood obesity has increased from 5% to 10.4% for children aged 2 to 5 years, from 6.5% to 19.6% for youth aged 6 to 11 years, and from 5% to 18.1% for adolescents aged 12 to 19 years.⁹ In Tennessee, two out of five students are either overweight or obese and about one in five is obese.¹⁰ The physical consequences of obesity in youth include increased risk for pediatric diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, menstrual abnormalities, and orthopedic problems. Factors such as low self-esteem and negative body image can also accompany obesity in children and adolescents.



"I have fun when I exercise with my family. We like to walk our dog, Charley—and Charley likes it, too!" — Seth, age 6