



Keep Your Family Active During the Winter Months

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Staying physically active year-round is important. During the winter months, the weather can present challenges when trying to be active. Here are some tips to help continue your family's active lifestyle, even when the weather is less than ideal.



The first step to being active is knowing how much physical activity is recommended each day. According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, adults need 2 ½ hours a week of physical activity and children ages 6-17 need 60 minutes a day. Here are some suggestions to help your family reach these recommendations:

- Make a plan and stick to it! The most effective way to make this happen is to include your family in the planning process. Set specific times during the week when you can be active together.
- Be realistic with your goals. Most families are busy, and leaving the house may not be the best option. Make a plan for physical activity to happen at home.
- Brainstorm a list of activities your family enjoys during the months when the weather is nice and how these can be adapted to the winter months.
- Turn off the TV and other electronic devices. Your family should have no more than two hours per day of screen time.

Aerobic exercise is any activity that raises your heart rate. It involves movement that makes you sweat! During the winter, the biggest barrier may be that it is too cold to do this outside. Here are few ideas for using items at home to create active games inside.

- **Enjoy a dance party!** Turn on your favorite music and show off your dance moves.
- **Play an activity called "All Stop & Go to Music"**³. Everybody moves while music is playing. Everybody freezes when the music is stopped.
- **Try a game of modified musical chairs.** Set up stations around the room using objects like blocks. When the music stops, everyone needs to be standing near one of the objects. If you are not near an object, you are then out of the game. Have other activities set up around the room, such as a yoga mat to do sit-ups while those who are waiting for the game to end. The key is for everyone to stay active.
- **Create activity sticks to use throughout the day.** Write an activity (i.e. squats, arm circles, skipping, etc.) on each craft stick. Take turns drawing a stick and have all family members participate in the activity.
- **Make story time active time.** Select a book that has a word that is often repeated. Every time that word comes up in the story, everyone does a jumping jack or hops on one foot. Change up the story and movements.

Sources:

1. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: <https://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition>
2. Be an Active Family, USDA's ChooseMyPlate: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-be-an-active-family>
3. All Stop and Go Music from Active Play! Fun Physical Activities for Young Children (Craft, D. & Smith, C., 2008)

Check out additional Family Fun on the Run Newsletters: <http://go.unl.edu/familyrun>. This newsletter has been peer-reviewed.