

Running With Your Kids

Written by Alyssa Wessling (awessling@unl.edu), SNAP-Ed Extension Assistant



Running with family is a fun way for children to get the minimum 60 minutes of physical activity they need each day.

Getting Started

Running with your family can foster a passion for exercise for both you and your children. Here are tips to ensure your children have a fun, safe and rewarding time exercising with you:

1. **Offer, Don't Pressure:** Do not pressure your child into joining you. Invite them and talk about how much fun you have on your runs.
2. **Start Slow:** If your child ready to start running with you, it is important to start slowly. Children prior to puberty should have an emphasis placed simply on moving, not an exercise regime. Refrain from pressuring your child to run with you every day. If your child wants to run with you daily, slow it down a few

times a week. Try running only short distances, between the light poles or to the end of the block, then walk for at least double that distance. It is important to remember their bodies are growing and not to exhaust them.

3. **Go Easy:** When running with your kids, it is important to remember that they are little. What may seem like a small hill to you is a mountain to them. You might feel that you are hardly moving, but their little legs may be struggling to keep up. If you are already a dedicated runner, don't use the runs with your family as your workout, rather as your cool down or a warmup for your big run.
4. **Go Off-Roading:** To avoid the common complaint, "it's just so boring," get your kids more excited about running by taking it off the beaten trail (or sidewalk). Try running in a local park or on hiking trails. When choosing your running location, always take safety into

consideration. Places with large inclines, drop offs, or bodies of water may not be the safest place to exercise with your family. However, soft terrains are much easier on your children's growing bones than the typical pavement.

5. **Be Prepared:** Even if you are only planning a short 30-minute run it is vital to bring water and a cell phone for emergencies. Just like you would for yourself, make sure your kiddos are dressed for the challenge. Invest in a quality pair of running shoes with trail traction to keep your family safe during those off-roading excursions.

For more information check out Family Fun on the Run:

<http://go.unl.edu/familyfun>

Sources:

1. *Aerobic, Muscle- and Bone-Strengthening: What Counts?*, CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/children/what_counts.htm
2. *Making Physical Activity a Part of a Child's Life*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://bit.ly/3VG3uZA>