

Getting your family going

To be healthy and active, mums, dads and kids all need physical activity every day. Your continuing health and wellbeing depends on it. And so does the growth and development of your children.

By becoming more active, families benefit in so many ways. Kids tend to stay within a healthier weight range and build stronger bones, muscles and joints. Active kids have less chance of developing some of the risk factors for heart problems and diabetes later in life. Kids who are regularly active also tend to have higher self-esteem, and kids who are involved in organised activities tend to have well-developed social skills and can relate better to others.

But everyone in the family benefits, not just your kids. An active lifestyle means a healthier, happier family. Here are some simple ways to become a more active family.

1. **Be active together.** Quality time isn't time in front of the TV, or eating takeaway food in the car. Plan some trips. Picnics are great or a day at the footy or cricket. Being active together will improve personal relationships and get your family communicating better.
2. **Encourage both moderate and vigorous activities every day.** As a family, aim to do a range of different activities that helps everyone develop healthy bones, muscles and joints. Do more moderate exercise like brisk walking and vigorous activities that make everyone 'huff and puff'. A game of footy in the backyard will get the blood flowing!
3. **Get active any way you can.** Kids love it when mum and dad join in their games. Throw a frisbee or ball together, fly a kite or play hop-scotch. Stay active by walking the children to school or riding your bike to work or the shops.
4. **Become a team player.** Team games are great fun. Play football, basketball, netball, tennis or soccer by joining a club, or just play team games with friends in the neighbourhood.
5. **Be more active around the house.** Take the stairs, walk the dog, lift, carry, push and pull with enthusiasm. Turn work into fun.
6. **Take up active recreation at every opportunity.** Enrol kids in dance classes. Or, for that matter, enrol yourself! The tango can give you quite a workout. Enjoy rollerskating, take up swimming, go for a gentle run or a brisk walk.
7. **Get into physical education.** The importance of physical education for children shouldn't be underestimated. All children deserve the opportunity to learn new skills to be active for life. Try a range of activities that call for different skills, like catching, throwing, balance and coordination.
8. **Reduce inactive leisure time.** Limit television viewing, cut down on video games and reduce time surfing the net.



**TURN OFF,
SWITCH
TO PLAY**



STRIDE AND RIDE

9. **Go for free family fun.** Not all family activities cost you money. There are many free activities such as a family walk or a game in the backyard or local park.
10. **Get the family involved in local activities.** Encourage more social involvement by joining after school clubs and taking part in community events.
11. **Be a good role model for your kids.** If an active lifestyle is part of your life, you're much more likely to pass on similar good habits to your children.
12. **Explore ways to be an active family.** Explore a national park, go bushwalking, hike and camp in the hills, take a walking tour of the city, bike ride together and play with your kids.
13. **Take part in community events.** Help organise fun events in your community, volunteer for a litter clean-up or a working bee. It's great to create opportunities to be involved in the community.
14. **Lock up your car.** Leave the car at home for short journeys like the school run and trips to the shops - take a bike ride, go rollerblading or walk there instead.
15. **Support your children's choice of activities.** Some kids go for organised sports such as netball and basketball. Other children prefer less structured activities like bike riding. Whatever their choice, praise them for their efforts.
16. **Give gifts and presents that encourage activities.** For birthdays and Christmas, give bats and balls, frisbees, bikes, skateboards or skipping ropes. Make it easy for your children to stay active.
17. **Develop a family action plan.** As a family, decide what activities you'd like to cover. Choose activities you enjoy doing together. Write down your plan for all the family to see.
18. **Chart your family's progress.** It's a good idea to keep a physical activity diary. You'll be amazed how fitness levels increase.
19. **Schedule an activity routine every weekend.** For example, plan a series of walks every Saturday or Sunday.
20. **Invite others to take part.** Ask neighbours, friends and grandparents to be part of your family activity routine. It will help you all to stay motivated.
21. **Take it nice and easy.** Start physical activity slowly and gradually pick up the pace. Drink water before, during and after all activities.
22. **Wear the right clothing.** Dress in loose fitting, light-weight clothing. Shoes should be a comfortable fit with good cushioning. Sunscreen and a hat for outside sports are vital, especially in summer and even when it's cloudy.
23. **Cool it down.** At the end of family activity sessions, cool down your muscles by slowing the pace of the activity before stopping.

If you'd like any more information, tips or advice on increasing physical activity throughout your or your family's day visit goforyourlife.vic.gov.au or call 1300 73 98 99