

10 TIPS FOR

familyfitness

Boost your family fitness with Caitlin Reid's top 10 family fitness tips.

GET KIDS AWAY FROM TV

1 Find them a sport
Despite US research showing normal-weight kids are more likely to participate in sport than overweight or obese kids, sport is for every child. If your child feels they lack the skills for netball and football, introduce them to less common sports such as volleyball or badminton. It's less likely that 'sporty' kids will be involved in these sports, which gives timid kids time to practise their skills, boost their confidence levels and enjoy sport.

2 Be good role models
Do you sit on the couch at every chance? Because if you do, there's very little chance your kids will be enthusiastic about exercise. As kids imitate their parents' actions, they'll adopt a healthy lifestyle and make exercise a priority if their parents do. Talk positively to your kids about exercise and encourage them to maintain their fitness efforts.



AVOID 'NAGGING' YOUR PARTNER

3 Don't make an issue out of it
Nothing will turn your partner off more than hearing you harp on about the benefits of exercise. So instead of nagging him to stop being a couch potato, ask him to help you get fit. Plan enjoyable training sessions together – the couple that plays together, stays together.

4 Give them a fitness gift
Is it birthday time again? Instead of buying the man in your life a larger shirt, why not purchase a male-friendly activity for him to enjoy. Try adrenalin-pumping pursuits such as white-water rafting, rock-climbing, surfing lessons or even an outdoor adventure pack. Or you could give him a personal training pack or buy a punching bag for the backyard. Just be prepared – he may want you to join in on the fun!

SNEAK EXERCISE INTO EVERYONE'S DAY

5 Actively commute to school and work
Parents, teenagers and children can benefit from actively commuting to work and school. One US study found that children who walk or cycle to school are not only more active, but have better cardiovascular fitness than children who are driven or catch public transport. While for adults, actively commuting to work promotes a positive attitude towards physical activity. Overcome child safety issues by enrolling them in the Walking School Bus program. If you live too far from work to actively commute the whole way, do it part of the way instead.

6 Play together
Kids love it when their parents take interest in them, especially when an activity is involved. Take your kids to the park, kick a footy together, throw a ball, teach them to swim or fly a kite. Socialising with your kids has been proven to boost their self-esteem, which makes it more likely they will remain active in their adulthood. As parents you will also benefit from the quality time you'll spend with your kids.

STOP THE EXCUSES

7 Put the family on a fitness plan
Do your kids complain when told to go outside instead of playing on the computer? Or is your partner constantly on the couch watching television? Then it's time to put your whole family on a fitness plan. The plan need not be difficult – just add in small changes that will deliver big results. Send the message that physical activity is a fun, healthy habit that makes you feel fantastic. One US family fitness study showed that when 68 children and their families were put on a 12-week healthy lifestyle plan, two thirds had better self-esteem and a whopping 81 per cent improved their body mass index. So get planning!

8 Plan for all eventualities
All of us have made excuses at some time for why we can't exercise and stay fit. We may say it's too cold; or there's no time; or we're too tired. But, these excuses are sabotaging our efforts to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Overcome your excuses with a plan. If it's pouring outside, move your training inside with a workout DVD or a trip to the indoor swimming pool. Or if you're too tired, make that an extra reason to get active as exercise boosts energy levels.



CREATE A FITNESS-FRIENDLY HOUSEHOLD

9 Make exercise accessible
Instead of purchasing video games, DVDs and other electronic equipment for family members' birthdays, give them skipping ropes, tennis racquets, soccer balls, netballs and any other exercise equipment you can think of. Leave them in an accessible and visible position and encourage your family to use them as much as possible.

10 Make it fun
Fun and creative exercise programs are more likely to get your family involved. So instead of making exercise a chore, make it a fun day out in the park, a family cycling day or a ritual tennis round robin.



Caitlin Reid, an accredited exercise physiologist, says exercising with your family can make fitness fun.