Get Up & Move!

Parent Newsletter Series 1: October

Walk Your Way to Better Health!
This month your children have learned about the health benefits of walking. Walking is one of the easiest ways to be physically active. It is easier on the joints than jogging or other high impact activities and has a low occurrence of injuries. Walking is also fairly inexpensive - all you need is a pair of walking shoes and comfortable clothing. Walking shoes should have sturdy soles, good arch support, and adequate heel padding. Walking may help:

- Increase energy
- Preserve mental sharpness
- Reduce stress and promote relaxation
- Strengthen and tone muscles
- Increase the body’s ability to burn calories
- Improve stamina and overall fitness
- Lower the risk of heart disease and diabetes
- Provide an opportunity to socialize with family and friends

Walk This Way
It is important that you and your children practice correct form when walking. You should walk with your chin up and your shoulders held slightly back. When you take a step, the heel of your foot should touch the ground first and your foot should roll forward. Your toes should be pointing forward when you walk and your arms should swing at your sides.

When you walk, you should start and stop slowly. Five minutes of a slow walk at the beginning and end of your workout is recommended so that your body can get used to the changes in exertion level. You and your children might also want to start and finish a walk with light stretches.

Beginning a Walking Program
The average person gets less than 6,000 steps per day. Even a half hour of daily walking can help to achieve the goal of 10,000 steps per day! To work toward this goal, you and your children might like to begin a walking program. You should set goals and keep track of your progress in a walking log, such as the one found at http://www.4-h.uiuc.edu/opps/move/0410_walk_log.pdf. You can also create your own log, which might include how many days you walked each week and for how long. It is important to stick to a walking schedule. Walking time should be treated like an appointment that you would not want to miss. It’s alright if you miss a few sessions or need to switch your walking times. Just try to get back on a regular schedule when possible. The important thing is that you and your children continue to move!
You and your family should try to walk together because exercising in a group is more motivating than exercising alone and can be a lot more fun! You may also want to consider forming a neighborhood walking group with your family and the families of your children’s friends. Although walking is a great physical activity, you and your family should try to add variety into your routine by incorporating other types of physical activities. These can include cycling, aerobics, dancing, martial arts, or playing a sport such as basketball or soccer.

**Ways to Step it up More Every Day**

There are many ways to incorporate more walking into you and your children’s daily routine in addition to starting a walking program. Below are some ideas of how your children can increase their number of daily steps:

- Walk to school every day
- Walk to a friend’s house
- Walking the stairs at home
- Take breaks while watching TV to walk around the house or the block
- Help find items at the supermarket or unload groceries
- Taking a five minute “family walk” after dinner

You and your children should use the suggestions listed above to brainstorm more ideas about how you can increase your daily steps. Remember that younger children should never walk alone. Make sure your children are walking with an adult or older friend or sibling at all times. Most importantly, have fun while trying to meet your daily step goals. Showing your children that they can have fun with their fitness will motivate them to become active adults!

Source: (http://win.niddk.nih.gov; www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com; http://lancaster.unl.edu)