Get Up & Move!

Staying Active!
The month of December can be a very busy one for you and your family. There are many activities centered on the holidays, and many of them can involve more eating and less moving. This month, your children have learned about the importance of maintaining physical fitness, even during the colder months. It is important that you support your children when it comes to staying active throughout the winter. Keep in mind that physical activity does not have to be done in one long session. Exercise can be broken down into three to four ten minute sessions every day. Your children should be getting 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

Physical activity is very important because it:

- builds self-esteem and feelings of well-being
- increases fitness levels
- builds endurance and muscle strength
- enhances flexibility and posture
- lowers risk of heart disease, colon cancer, and type II diabetes
- helps control blood pressure
- helps to maintain a healthy weight

The holidays provide us with many tasty, and sometimes less healthy treats, so continuing with daily physical activity is definitely important!

You and your children should find activities that you enjoy, and ones that can be done on a regular basis. Fitting activity into your daily schedule can be as easy as taking a brisk 10 minute walk, or joining an exercise class. Try to rotate the activities that you do in order to maintain motivation. In order to promote physical activity at any time, make sure you and your children have a pair of sneakers and comfortable clothes to change into at home, school, or at the office.
When you are with your children, try getting the entire family involved in an activity. Some ideas include:

- cleaning the house
- walking, stretching, or doing exercises while watching TV or listening to music
- dancing
- playing in the snow
- ice skating at the local rink
- building snowmen
- having a friendly snowball fight

Some of the suggestions above are outdoor activities that require warm clothing. If you and your children are outside in cold weather, make sure that everyone is dressed warm with coats, hats, gloves and scarves.

When you and your children want to be active in the house, get creative and use objects around the house as resistance or weights in order to incorporate strength training into you and your children’s daily routine. You do not need to have weights because you can use objects like soup cans to do an activity such as bicep curls. There are many household objects that can be good fitness tools, but make sure you are supervising your children when they use these objects for exercise.

Another way to stay active is by parking far away from stores when you and your family are out shopping so that you walk farther to your destination. Also, if you and your family are at a mall, try walking quickly or staying in the mall longer just to have a place indoors to get more exercise.

In addition, you might want to register your children for an activity class they are interested in at a local gym or community center during the winter months. Ideas for classes include aerobics, martial arts, dance, yoga, or cycling.

Staying active in the winter is really all about getting creative and modifying activities that you and your children may do in the warmer months. This is the time of year to try new activities and have fun with physical activity! Also, remember to help your children keep track of their physical activity minutes and record them in their December calendar!

(Source: [http://www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov); [www.nwhealth.edu](http://www.nwhealth.edu))