FAMILY CHORES FOR FAMILY FITNESS

LIFE SKILL
managing time

Why use household chores to promote family fitness?
Sometimes it's hard to fit regular exercise into a family's busy schedule. Instead of signing up for a class or going to the gym, consider designing your family's exercise program around household chores you'd be doing anyway. Experts say that fitness depends on (a) the amount of effort you put into an activity, (b) the time you spend doing the activity, and (c) how often you do the activity.

What do we need?

paper and pencil

How long will it take?

30 to 45 minutes several times a week, whenever you would normally be performing household chores

What do we do?

Separate your family's chores into the following two categories.

1 moderate activity: chores that involve mild stretching, bending, and reaching movements. Examples include setting and clearing the table; making beds; loading and unloading the washer and dryer; dusting; light gardening; nonstrenuous farm chores such as feeding livestock

2 vigorous activity: activities that require enough exertion to stimulate the heart, lungs, and circulation. Examples include scrubbing floors by hand; vacuuming; washing windows; washing and waxing the car; scrubbing the bathroom tub and sink; hoeing and weeding in the lawn or garden; shoveling snow; mowing the lawn with a push mower; and carrying things up and down stairs.
Use your list to put together a 30- to 45-minute exercise program for each member of the family. The program should be one that can be repeated several times during the week. Include only those activities that can be done at a rhythmic, steady pace. A good chore workout consists of three separate phases:

- **Warm-up**
  Pick out one or two chores from the moderate list. Spend 5 to 10 minutes working at a steady pace with no breaks. This activity will relax your muscles, prevent strain, and prepare your body for a more vigorous workout.

- **Vigorous activity**
  Move quickly into several chores from the vigorous list. To be effective, these chores should be done as briskly and energetically as possible. Move quickly from one chore to the next for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

- **Cool-down**
  Spend the last 5 to 10 minutes of your workout doing one or two chores from the moderate list. This cool-down period will give your heart rate a chance to get back to its resting level. It will also prevent muscle cramping and stiffness.

**Hints**
- Lively music can help you keep a steady, vigorous pace while you work.
- After you've established your chore workout, you can turn it into a "par course." Select a few calisthenic exercises to include at various intervals. Here are some examples.
  - Load the washing machine; then touch your toes 10 times.
  - Make the beds; then do 10 sit-ups.
  - Take out the garbage; then do 15 jumping jacks.

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What happened?

▼ How did family members react to making an exercise plan using household chores?
▼ How did they feel before they tried it? After they tried it?

What did you learn?

▼ How was the teamwork you used in this activity similar to teamwork in an organized sport?
▼ Why was it more fun to do chores and exercises at the same time?

Why was this activity important?

▼ Why is it easier to get something done when you’ve made a plan for getting it done?
▼ How did you feel at the end of your “workout?”

What’s next?

▼ Can you think of other activities you can combine with exercise to make each more interesting and valuable?