

Patti Komara
Tumblebear Connection
PO Box 117
Dyer, IN 46311
Phone (219) 865-2274
Fax (219) 865-2389
www.tumblebear.com

Make Fitness Fun For Your Kids

The song, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" is true. And, so do boys. If you make fitness fun, they'll participate, enjoy it, and continue to like it throughout their lives.

Starting children when they're young with fun and fitness is very important. In 1978 the Newman and Strong Study showed through autopsies done on preschoolers, that even as young as three year olds, children show signs of coronary risk factors. They had discovered streaks of fatty deposits in their blood. We have to get our children active and help to keep them active throughout their life. Obviously, it is extremely important to promote regular exercise to our children.

Because children's bodies are so small they naturally have impaired cardiac output and stroke volume and lower oxygen capacity due to smaller heart and lungs. Because of their inhibited lung capacity they breathe quicker than adults and prefer a start and stop activity over something that is more aerobic in nature. Most kids naturally don't like aerobic activity. They lack the attention span and it is physically uncomfortable for them. What can we do then as parents to see that our children are growing and physically getting stronger? Encourage active play. Encourage them to join gymnastics and structured exercise classes, soccer teams, and any group of kids that MOVE!

Society has helped to make couch potatoes out of children. With the crime rate as it is, many parents don't feel comfortable allowing their children to go out to play freely like they did when they were kids. In many families both the mother and father work and don't get

home in time to allow their children to go out and play. And, they don't feel comfortable for the babysitter to watch them outside. In light of that, we have to take charge of our children's fitness. We know as parents it's our job to get our children to team practices, gymnastics, or dance classes. These activities will prevent adult obesity, and are worth our extra time and effort.

Some shocking statistics that have come to light recently from Dr. Cooper's Institute and cannot be ignored. For school age children 30%-35% are at risk for heart disease. Half of all children don't engage in physical activity long enough to receive aerobic benefit. Only 32% of children ages 6-17 met the minimum standards for physical fitness out of 12,000 children tested. For children ages 5-8 it was found they already have at least one heart disease risk factor. Only the state of Illinois requires four years of daily physical education in high school. Parents, we have to take action! Register your children today for activity classes...gymnastics, dance, KidzStep, etc. Sign them up for team sports and encourage them to play outside. More than that... we as parents need to play with them. Let this be your excuse to act like a kid. Jump in and play with your children. They'll love you for it, and they'll appreciate what you're doing for them.

According to a Harvard study, in the last 20 years there has been a 54% increase in body fat in children. That percentage has doubled since the 1960's. This is partially due to poor eating habits, but mainly because of lack of physical exercise. The psychological ramifications from children making fun of overweight peers can be hideous on young boys and girls. The chances of an overweight teen becoming an overweight adult is 80%. If a child comes from a home where both parents are obese there is an 80% chance they too will become obese adults. How can we stop this terrible downward swing of physical fitness in our youth? They have got to start moving.

Try to encourage your child to ride their bike or walk to their friend's house. Park further away from the store and walk. Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator. Add activity and movement to your child's life whenever you can.

During the summer months make sure your children don't overheat. Children have an under developed thermal regulatory system. They have problems regulating their own temperature and can't effectively sweat like adults. They also need water replacement continually. Make sure they drink water before, during, and after activity...especially in warm weather. Have them drink water at room temperature; the body absorbs it more readily.

The best advice is to be a good example. Ride your bike with your children. Go on family bike rides. Go swimming. Don't just lay on the beach and watch the kids. Get in there and play! Go skating or roller skating as a family. Take them skiing with you. Get your family active and show the kids that fitness can be a family affair and that it can be FUN! Start a newer, fitter life for your loved ones today! Remember, the family who sweats together sticks together!