

WELLNESS EXCHANGE

September 2014 Newsletter

Get Your Kids in Shape

Have you been neglecting your children's fitness? If so, you may only be helping to raise yet another generation of overweight, unfit couch potatoes, according to Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D., founder and president of the Cooper Clinic in Dallas and a world-renowned authority on aerobics and fitness.



"Research shows that kids are [more fat] and less fit today than they were 20 years ago," says Dr. Cooper.

Experts recommend children get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most days for good health and fitness and to maintain a healthy weight during growth.

Roadblocks to Fitness

Lack of activity combined with poor eating habits are to blame. Dr. Cooper cites these primary factors contributing to children's inactivity:

- **Lack of physical education in schools.** Most states have no mandatory physical education programs in their schools.
- **Motorized transportation.** Children aren't riding their bicycles or walking to school anymore.
- **Television, computers and video games.** Children spend at least 25 to 35 hours a week watching television, playing video games or sitting behind their computers.

"By the time children graduate from high school, they've spent far more time at the computer or television than they have sitting in front of their teachers," says Dr. Cooper.

Encourage Healthy Activities

With schools lagging, it is increasingly important for parents to encourage healthy activities in kids. Before encouraging your child to begin a new sports or fitness program, make sure he or she has a physical exam. The doctor will look for any previously undiagnosed medical problems, or hearing or vision problems that would make participating in sports more difficult.

Also keep in mind your child's physical abilities. As kids grow older, they develop more sophisticated skills, so any physical activity should be age-appropriate.

At a minimum, parents ought to ensure youngsters engage in at least 60 minutes of activity, collectively, most days of the week.

Your child doesn't have to belong to a sports team to become fit. Competitive or team sports aren't for everyone. Some children feel too self-conscious to play on a team, or they fear they will embarrass themselves. Some kids might not be coordinated enough - or believe they aren't - to play on a team. Still others just aren't interested in team sports. What's important is that your child is active in some way.

Physical activities that a child can take on to adulthood include bicycling, running, hiking or the martial arts. They offer a good aerobic workout, but don't require a team to participate.

Additional Tips for Parents

- **Become a great role model.** Emphasize that physical activity is a key part of every day. In addition, consider assisting with your children's community sports teams as a coach, sponsor or helper. Don't make winning the only goal.
- **Launch a family fitness program.** Hold a family meeting to brainstorm and choose fitness activities. A weekly fitness outing might include walking, jogging, hiking, canoeing, swimming, cycling, tennis, ice-skating, basketball, skiing, skateboarding, biking, lawn mowing and yard work.
- **Arrange for someone else** - a friend, grandparent or sitter - to accompany your children to an athletic event or a workout if you can't make it.
- **Remember that activity doesn't have to be sports-related or "fun".** Mowing the lawn, weeding, taking out the garbage, housecleaning, washing the car and other productive activities get the heart and lungs working and burn calories. Don't be afraid to ask your child to "work."
- **Limit fast foods** to a once-a-week treat, or possibly even eliminate them entirely.

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Emergency Preparedness

If an emergency or disaster occurred tomorrow, would you be ready? Although we can't predict when and where a disaster will strike, we can prepare for an emergency based on our existing knowledge. The more you prepare for a disaster, the more quickly you and your loved ones can recover.



Create a Disaster Kit

To fully prepare for a potential disaster or emergency, both the Department of Homeland Security and the American Red Cross recommend that households assemble emergency kits for their homes. You should include:

- **Water:** Store water in plastic containers rather than glass or cardboard ones. Store a three-day supply of water for every member of your household. Each person needs a gallon of water per day. Freshen your supply every six months.
- **Food:** Have a three-day supply of nonperishable food items ready in your disaster kit. Choose items that don't require refrigeration or cooking such as canned meats/vegetables/fruits, granola bars or protein bars. Update your food supply every six months. Prepare a three-day supply of pet food and extra water for any pets you may have.
- **First Aid Kit:** Create a first aid kit for both your home and car. Include items such as bandages and gauze, over-the-counter medicines, antiseptic, soap, latex gloves, scissors and adhesive tape.
- **Tools and Supplies:** Your toolkit should contain flashlights with extra batteries, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, signal flares, a fire extinguisher, matches in a waterproof container, a whistle to signal for help, dust masks for each member of your household, plastic sheeting, duct tape, as well as a wrench and/or pliers to turn off utilities. Other supplies to bring include a manual can opener, local maps, cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger, moist towelettes, toilet paper, garbage bags and plastic ties.
- **Clothing and Bedding:** Place at least one change of long-sleeved, full-legged clothes and sturdy footwear per person in your disaster kit. Include a sleeping bag and blanket for each person in your household.
- **Special Items:** Take into consideration the special needs of your household members. Don't forget to prepare for the needs of infants, the elderly, or the disabled. Baby formula, diapers, prescription medications and glasses, as well as any other specialized medical supplies are all important things to remember. Store important documents in a fire resistant and waterproof container.

Make a Family Communication Plan

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), your Family Communication Plan should include where your family will meet during a disaster, how you will get to a safe place, how you will contact one another, how to get back together, and what to do in different types of emergency situations.

Every family member should know each other's contact numbers in addition to the local emergency numbers. Discuss potential disasters common to your area and modify your communication plan to fit each situation.

Plan for Locations

Similar to a Family Communication Plan for the home, you should have a plan – and supplies – for the locations you and your household members regularly go to. By planning ahead, you can rest assured knowing each member of your family will know what to do and have the necessary supplies, wherever they are.

Consider the locations you and your household members frequent. Find out what plans are available for these locations and create a customized plan around what you would do if an emergency occurred while at that location.

Examples of locations to plan for include:

- Workplace
- Schools and day care
- Shopping areas and retail centers
- Places of worship
- Vehicles, trains and urban commuter transit
- Sports arenas

Learn More

To learn more about how to become better prepared for a disaster, visit the following resources:

- <http://www.ready.gov>
- <http://www.redcross.org/prepare>
- <http://www.fema.gov/plan-prepare-mitigate>



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