

Family Fitness and Fun

Fit families are healthy families who have an active lifestyle. Frequently, they enjoy the things they do together, and the things they do together foster better communication and closer relationships than watching TV does.

Family fitness takes some parental commitment, leadership, and imagination, and you may have to listen to a lot of whining to start with, but the entire family will benefit as a result. Five factors that affect your family fitness plan are cost, convenience, family-friendly environment, fun, and success.

Cost

Family fitness doesn't have to be expensive. Sure, you can spend a couple of hundred dollars or more taking the family skiing. But you can find inexpensive activities in local parks and playgrounds, or just getting out for walks and bike rides. Use your imagination to come up with activities your family can do together that don't break the bank.

Convenience

Families are busy, and convenience is essential to a family fitness plan. If you have to go through a lot of hassle or travel a long way on a regular basis, you won't follow through. Plan activities that you can do in your own backyard or neighborhood, like play Frisbee, go Bowling. You can also stay home to rake up leaves and jump in them.

Family-Friendly Environment

When you join a club or plan an activity, make sure your whole family is welcome. It's not much fun to look forward to an outing, and then discover that your kids are the only ones there. You want an appropriate environment for young children, too, where they will be safe and not exposed to "adult" language or behavior.

Fun

Fun is the key to successful family fitness. If everybody has fun, you'll all want to do it again. Ask the kids what kind of activities they enjoy. You could even let them choose some family activities and help with the planning. Have a family meeting, and come up with a list of activities your family wants to try.

In addition to making sure your family fitness activities are fun, you can make sure your family fun activities center around fitness. Take everybody miniature golfing for a birthday instead of having a cake-and-ice-cream party. Go on those 10K walks when they come up (which you'll have to train for together). Walk around your neighborhood at Christmas and enjoy the lights. Bring fun and activity together as often as you can, and you and your kids will begin to associate an active lifestyle with having fun.

Every member of your family needs to feel successful at whatever activities your family chooses. They don't all have to be good at the activity as long as they enjoy it and feel good about themselves doing it. Family fitness can become an unhealthy competition that leaves less athletic family members feeling like failures, and that can defeat the purpose. Choose activities that everybody can participate in and enjoy at least moderate success at.

Your kids will remember and treasure family fitness outings. You're building good health habits and good childhood memories at the same time, and the whole family is having fun doing it.

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