

# Get Energized!

Recent studies report that many children are not physically active on a regular basis. Encourage your child to become involved in sports activities available at school or in the community. At home, you can try some of the activities suggested below to help your child be more active, and to reinforce the link between the foods you eat, exercise, and good health.



## GRAINS—THE FUEL FOOD

Grains (bread, pasta, or cereal, for example) are filled with complex carbohydrates, a great source of sustained daily energy. The Food Guide Pyramid recommends that children eat at least six servings of grains a day. Encourage your child to set a goal to meet this recommendation. Help your child meet this goal by trying new grain-based snacks together and keeping a log of the grains your family eats at home.

## OUTDOOR FITNESS FUN

Children love to be outside, and doing an activity with you makes the experience even more special.

Try these fun fitness ideas together:

• **Go on All-Season Scavenger Hunts Challenge** your child to walk more by joining him/her on a scavenger hunt. Before you set out, write up a list of items that you can both look for. See who can locate these items the fastest. For example, try to find:

- Items with different colors—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, or purple
- Objects with a variety of textures—smooth, fuzzy, hard, soft, wet

You can take scavenger hunt walks together during every season. Winter, spring, summer, or fall, there's always something interesting that you and your child can discover. You can adapt your checklist of items appropriately.

For example:

- Look for human and animal tracks in the snow
  - Search for signs of spring in new flowers and buds on trees
  - Find interesting shadows on a sunny summer day
  - Gather colorful leaves and acorns on a crisp autumn afternoon



## INDOOR EXERCISE ACTIVITIES

Physical activity doesn't have to mean running, hiking, or swimming. If the weather keeps you inside you can still keep fit.

• **Have a Dance Party** Dancing is a fun way to exercise and something fun that you and your child can do every day. Encourage your child to invent a dance to go along with a favorite song. Give your child the opportunity to be the teacher and instruct you in their new dance. Later, you can introduce your child to the dances you enjoy most, along with your own favorite songs.

• **Household Exercise Olympics** Many household jobs help to build strong bodies. Create your own Household Exercise Olympics. Together, you and your child can try the following "events":

- Raking leaves
- Shoveling snow
- Weeding the garden
- Dusting all furniture or washing all windows in a designated room

Try doing these activities in tandem. Afterwards, tally up the "medal" winners in each event and announce the top Olympian in your family at dinner that night.

## RELATED READING

After exercising, you and your child might want to settle down and read a book together—try *Bread,*

*Bread, Bread*, by Anna Morris (1989, Scholastic).

Filled with lots of photos, it tells the story of the variety of high-energy grain-based breads found all over the world.