

Exercise for Children

Children love to run, jump, climb, throw, and play! Outdoor parks are perfect venues for these activities. Parks have monkey bars, slides, jungle gyms, and other elements that enhance children's creativity, muscular strength and endurance, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, balance, and coordination. These components of fitness are often neglected as we get older. However, this neglect is now creeping into younger ages as video or computer games, television and other sedentary activities replace outdoor fun.

Children need activity, and although this may be hard to do in certain places during the colder months, it is necessary to make sure that our children are active. The *National Institutes of Health* recommends that most children need at least one hour of physical activity per day. Regular exercise for children helps them increase self-esteem, maintain a healthy weight, build and keep healthy muscles and bones, increase concentration, increase immunity, and sleep better at night! ¹

Parents should limit TV, video game, and computer time. The *American Academy of Pediatrics* recommends that children under the age of two years watch no TV at all and that screen time should be limited to no more than one to two hours of quality programming per day for kids two years and older.²

Parents can set a good example by being active themselves. Exercising together can be fun for everyone. Organized activities can also help kids stay fit. Jogging, gymnastics, ballet, swimming, children's exercise classes, soccer, and skating are some ways for kids to get exercise. Activities such as walking or biking to school, running errands, raking leaves, gardening, jogging, throwing a ball back and forth, kicking a ball, chasing each other, doing house chores, and other simple and fun activities with children are also great forms of physical activity.

Playing with our children and engaging in physical activity with them not only increases their physical fitness, but increases the bond between us. We develop trust, better communication, and patience when we play with our

children.³ So, let's take time out of our busy schedules, focus on fun activities they like to participate in, open up new opportunities for them by exposing them to new activities, and last but not least, actively play with them!

"Physical exercise and labor combined have a happy influence upon the mind, strengthens the muscles, and improves the circulation."⁴ Ellen White also states that, "In order for children and youth to have health, cheerfulness, vivacity, and well-developed muscles and brains, they should be much in the open air and have well-regulated employment and amusement."⁵ The Bible makes it clear that we should take very good care of our bodies.⁶ However, our fitness goals should not be in vain, how we look or how others admire use. Instead, our physical fitness goals should improve our health so we will have more physical energy to focus on spiritual goals.

1. US National Library of Medicine, 2011 www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exerciseforchildren.html

2. *Children, Adolescents, and Television*. The Committee on Public Education. *Pediatrics* Vol. 107(2), pp 423-426, aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;107/2/423

3. *Strategies to Foster Healthy Attachment*, North Dakota State University, 2009 www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/famsci/fs631.pdf.

4. *Counsels on Health* by Ellen White, p 201

5. *Counsels on Health* by Ellen White, pp 177-178

6. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20



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IN THE BIBLE

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
1 Corinthians 6:19–20

IN NATURE

Exercise can be done in many different venues: health clubs, your basement, the soccer field, or simply walking around your neighborhood. But there are good reasons to exercise out in nature. Recent research suggests that as little as five minutes of exercise in green spaces (a park, garden, nature trail) positively affects mood and self-esteem (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8654350.stm) Outdoor exercise also provides access to sunshine for vitamin D (just make sure to get that sunscreen on!) Many young children will walk farther where there are interesting things to look at. So, even if it is snowy or rainy, get out for 5 minutes! It's good for your body and your mood!

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- To keep a daily record of your child's physical activity, try a children's physical activity tracker page such as: tinyurl.com/3l9zrxy
- For tips on raising healthy, fit, and active children, visit tinyurl.com/42nfwx3
- Exercise helps overweight children think better, do better in math, *Science Daily* (Feb, 2011), tinyurl.com/3g7zq36
- Changing diet and exercise for kids, American Psychological Association (2011), tinyurl.com/3b7x5sp
- Physical education can exercise make children smarter? New York Times (Sept. 2010), tinyurl.com/2g3fsxe

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