

Physical Activity: Overcoming Obstacles

There are many benefits of regular physical activity; however, people often have many excuses for not being more physically active. The following is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics encouraging families to consider all the benefits of being physically active and how to overcome some obstacles. Each family member can take a step toward becoming more physically active by filling out the physical activity plan on page 2.

Benefits of being physically active

Being physically active is one way you can

- Have fun—this is important!
- Spend time with friends.
- Improve your body image.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Increase energy levels.
- Improve your self-image.
- Feel stronger.
- Increase your endurance for sport or hobbies.
- Get muscles or definition.
- Decrease stress.

Overcoming common obstacles

The following are suggestions on how to overcome 4 common barriers to physical activity.

1. “I don’t have time.”

What you can try

- Build activity into your day: walk or ride your bike for transportation.
- Get off the bus a stop early and walk the rest of the way.
- Take the stairs whenever possible.
- Plan fun, “active” activities with friends and family.
- Sign up for physical education at your school.
- Walk around the mall twice before you start shopping.

2. “I don’t like sports” or “I’m not good at any sports.”

What you can try

- Consider active hobbies, like gardening. You don’t have to play a sport to be active.
- Choose an activity that you enjoy. Dancing, bicycling, and swimming are fun choices. And walking counts too.
- Consider volunteer work, like helping at a youth center or serving meals at a shelter.
- Find a friend, sibling, or other family member to be an “activity buddy” and schedule a fun activity 2 to 3 times a week.

3. “My neighborhood isn’t safe.”

What you can try

- Use a workout video or DVD in your home.
- Dance in your home to your favorite music.
- Find a YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, or community recreation center in your neighborhood.
- Sign up for school activities such as physical education or after-school programs.

4. “I’m overweight or out of shape.”

What you can try

- Start slow with 10 to 15 minutes of activity; walking is a great start.
- Build short activity breaks into your day; take the stairs!
- Count up your daily sit-down activities (computer, video games, TV time) and decrease them by 30 minutes.
- Join an after-school program or community program that involves activity or learning a new skill—get a friend to go with you.

Physical Activity Plan

Each member can use the following questions to help create a personal physical activity plan. Parents can help their children fill out the questions. Parents also should remember that they can be powerful role models and can shape their children's perception of physical activity and exercise.

1. What are the main benefits I want from being physically active?

2. What are the reasons or barriers that keep me from being active?

3. If necessary, what will be my solutions to these barriers?

4. What activity or activities am I going to do?

5. Where am I going to do this activity?

6. When am I going to be active (include time of day and on which days of the week)?

7. How long or how many minutes will I be active each day?

8. Who will be my activity buddy?

NOTES

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