



Minutes

That's all it takes every day for you and your family to gain a lifetime of good health

It's that time of year again. Summer's over, the kids are back at school and the television networks are about to unveil enough new "must see" TV shows to consume all of your free time.

True, the luminous glow of the big screen TV and its endless hours of dramas, comedies, reality shows and sports programming can be hard to resist, especially after a hard day around the home or at work.

But before you succumb to the latest episode of *Glee* or *American Idol*, take a moment and ask yourself this: Have I made time for some physical activity with my family?

It's an important question, one that could have significant implications for the long-term physical and mental health of you and your family. Here's why.

Study after study shows that being physically active 30 to 60 minutes a day has many benefits for each member of your family. Exercise can reduce the risk for chronic disease, strengthen bones and muscles, help maintain a healthy weight, increase energy, and improve sleep patterns.

Physical activity can also help your child perform better in school by increasing his or her ability to focus in class. Being active can also provide mental health benefits. Increased patience, improved ability to deal with stress, better emotional control, decreased anxiety and reduced risk of depression – these are just some of the benefits that can come from physical activity.

It's also important to note that you can be a good role model for your kids. Research shows that parental support and attitudes play a huge role in their children's attitudes towards physical activity and the amount of physical activity they participate in. In other words, if you are active, your child will likely be active, and that will have a positive effect on their health as they grow older.

So now that you know how important it is to be active, what can you do about it?

Well, you can start by scheduling some family physical activity time. Set aside time in the calendar, just like you do for meals, homework, and appointments, for structured and unstructured active family time.

Being a parent means something different to everyone, and is based on a whole host of variables. But I feel pretty confident in saying that each parent wants the best for their children. By ensuring that you and your child are physically active on a daily basis, you are doing one more thing to ensure your child lives a happy and healthy life.

Deanna Betteridge is a co-ordinator with Winnipeg *in motion*.



Quick tips for getting active

Parents of infants, preschoolers and children

Find ways to be active together and encourage the development of fundamental movement skills.

Support and encourage active play

- Around the house, in the yard, or with neighbourhood kids.
- Playing traditional games of hide-and-go-seek or tag.

Schedule family physical activity time

- Dance, go for a walk or swim, play at your neighbourhood park, or learn a new activity together (I recommend hula-hooping – its a great workout and lots of fun!).
- Set up an obstacle course that every one can use (including adults).

Turn story time into active story time

- Act out the story.
- Have everyone take turns to mimic the actions of the characters in the books (especially good with animal books).

Participate in parent and child programming, for children of all ages

- As parents of young children, the best way to find time for your own physical activity is to work it into your play time with your children – be creative and have fun with it! (Check with your local recreation centre to find out what's offered in your neighbourhood).

Parents of teens

Be an active-living role model by being physically active yourself and supporting your teen to find ways that he/she can be active.

Support and encourage your teen to find active ways to transport themselves to school

- Walk, cycle, skateboard, rollerblade, etc.

Support continued participation in activities or sports they participate in

- This may include financially, transporting to and from activities, or just general support and encouragement to find success in their participation.

Encourage your teen to try new structured or unstructured physical activities

- If your teen is up for it, there are parent-teen programs available (check with your local recreation centre).
- As parents of teenage children, you may feel like you have less control over what they do with their time, but you definitely still have a strong influence as a role model!

Parents of adult children

Be an active-living role model by being active together, or support them to be active by watching their children for them.

Plan multi-generation active outings for your family

Start a new "active" family tradition

- Similar to Sunday family dinners, have Sunday activity days.
- Weekly walks together.

Register to take a physical activity program together

- Yoga, fitness classes, boot camp, Zumba dance.

Set goals together

- Train to do a run or cycle together.
- As parents of adult children your physical activities will tend to revolve around social time you spend together.

For more information and ideas, visit:

Winnipeg *in motion*
www.winnipeginmotion.ca

Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card
www.activehealthykids.ca

City of Winnipeg Leisure Guide
www.leisureonline.ca

Winnipeg *in motion* is a partnership of the Winnipeg Health Region, the City of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba.

For more information on how you and your family can be more physically active, call 940.3648 or visit www.winnipeginmotion.ca

