



Staying fit with your child

Parents with young children commonly complain about the lack of time to keep physically fit. Caring for a baby is a 24-7 occupation. No wonder parents feel they can't go to the gym or continue to bowl in the weekly league.

Now you have a new fitness partner — your child! Look for ways to use your child's love of moving to provide physical activity for yourself. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

WITH YOUR INFANT:

- Hold your baby securely and dance to music. Sometimes your little one will like grooving to a salsa beat, and other times she'll need a slow, dreamy waltz.
- Walking with your baby in a front pack or stroller gets you out and moving. Your baby will like the changing scenery, or he'll take a snooze. Either way, you can walk as vigorously as you want.
- Exercise classes that include your baby and the use of her stroller as exercise equipment are becoming popular. Look for one in your community.

WITH YOUR TODDLER:

- Your child will love imitating stretching movements like touching toes, head circles, and side reaches. She will improve her balance and you'll gain flexibility.
- Be an active play partner at the play-ground. Show your child, don't just tell him, how to climb the ladder to the slide. Run in place while you push your child on a swing.
- Run after your child. Toddlers love a good game of chase. Roll a ball for your child to chase. Give her a head start, then race to see who gets to the ball first.

- Imitate your child. Follow him around and do everything he does. You will learn just how active a toddler is!

WITH YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- To get down on your child's level, do leg squats or lunges. Play Jack-in-the-Box with your child as you do squats. Invite your child to imitate you.
- Lie on the floor and do crunches. Ask your child to play patty cake on your stomach. The patting sensation will engage all your stomach muscles.
- Take your child swimming. Be safe and stay right by his side. Hold on to the side of the pool and kick while he plays. Using a safe flotation device for your child, take him out to deeper water where you can tread water beside him. Treading water is a great strength and endurance activity.

When your child sees you enjoying physical activity, she will want to do it too. And she will have a model for gaining life long health, fitness, and recreation. ❖

JACK-IN-THE-BOX RHYME

Crouch in a squat position facing your child and say:

"Jack-in-the-box, so quiet and still. Will you come out?"

Jump up and say:

"Yes! I will!"

Repeat.

Soon your child will be joining in.

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