

Extension

February 2017 Newsletter

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Physical Activity for the Whole Family

Sheila Gains, Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent, Arapahoe County

Colorado ranks 24th in the nation for the amount of physical activity our children get. Almost 55% of our Colorado kids are not getting the amount of physical activity they need each week. School-aged children and adolescents should get a total of 1 hour or more of physical activity each day.

Why does this matter? When children get enough exercise their learning, attitude and behavior at school improves. When children are physically active they also sleep better. Research indicates that children who are physically active and eating well, do better in school and are better prepared for lifelong success.

What can you do?

If your neighborhood does not have safe playgrounds or parks:

- Ask local government officials what can be done to improve your community's access to safe places to play.
- Ask local businesses if they can help find short term and long term ideas to ensure the community has safe places for children to be physically active.

If your child does not get daily physical education (PE) in school:

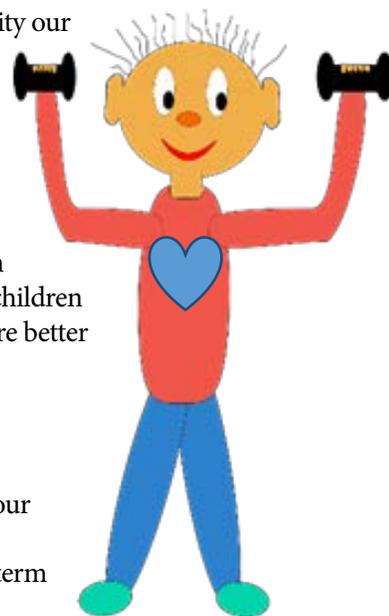
- Find out how many minutes of physical education your child gets.
- Ask your school what it would take for them to offer PE daily. Form a parent committee to look into solutions to offering PE more often.
- If more PE time is not possible, look for ways your school is working to ensure all children are encouraged to be physically active during recess. Do they have enough space and equipment for children to play?
- Does your school have a policy that discourages punishing children by taking away recess time? Researchers believe getting enough physical activity can actually improve behavior and brain function, so taking recess time away is not a good solution.

Do your part at home and on weekends:

- Go for a 15 minute family walk before dinner or before starting homework.
- Have kids take a 5 minute physical activity break every 20 to 30 minutes while doing homework. Try dancing, jumping jacks, marching in place, stretching or running up a flight of stairs, anything that gets them moving and the blood flowing.

Wintertime Weekend Family Friendly Challenge

Challenge everyone in the family to participate in one of these daily exercise routines during the weekend. Adapt the exercises to meet any physical challenges family members might have. The goal is for everyone to stay physically active for at least 30 minutes each day.



Activities for Getting Physically Active Inside:

1. Dance for 5-10 minutes – to get your heart beating fast.
2. Do squats, 3 sets of ten, with a 30 second break between sets.
3. Try to hold your body in the plank position for up to 1 minute, do 5 times with a 30 second break between attempts.
4. Lay down on your back and bicycle your legs in the air for 5-10 minutes.
5. Do simple stretches or yoga moves for 5 minutes.



Activities for Getting Physically Active Outside:

1. Skip rope or walk quickly for 5 -10 minutes – to get your heart beating fast.
2. Game of Tag or Keep Away for 5 – 10 minutes.
3. Step up and down on a curb for 5 minutes. Alternate which leg steps up each time.
4. Throwing a ball back and forth or have a snowball fight for 5- 10 minutes.
5. Do simple stretches for 5 minutes.

Let's Talk

Motivating children to be more physically active can be a challenge, especially if they are not comfortable with moving their body, would rather watch TV or play computer games. Explain to children that being more physically active is good for their brain and body. Let them know you are trying to be more physically active yourself and would like to have their help staying motivated by doing a physical activity challenge together as a family.

Recipe for Health: Chicken Vegetable Soup with Kale

Ingredients:

- ½ cup peeled and chopped onion
- ¾ cup chopped carrot
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon ground thyme
- 2 cloves peeled and finely diced garlic
- 3 cups canned low-sodium chicken broth
- ¾ cup tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup cubed, cooked, skinless chicken
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 2 cups chopped kale



Directions:

1. Wash hands with warm water and soap.
2. Wash fresh vegetables before preparing.
3. Heat oil in a large pan over medium heat.
4. Add onion and carrot to pan. Cook until vegetables are tender, about 5-8 minutes.
5. Stir in thyme and garlic. Cook for one minute.

6. Add broth, tomatoes, cooked rice, chicken and kale.
7. Simmer for 5-10 minutes before serving.
8. Serve hot.

Makes 3 servings, approximately 2 ½ cups each.

Recipe from USDA, SNAP-Ed Connection Recipe Finder;
Washington State University.