

Ways to Wellness™

Integrative Medicine for Kids

EXERCISE



What's it about?

What's your usual response to "Go out and get some exercise!" "I'm already exercising my thumbs with Playstation." "Thanks, but my favorite show is on."

It's a rare kid who actually *likes* the idea of exercise. Exercise especially sounds like a drag when you're overweight, feel sick, or just don't like doing some of the things we think of as exercise, such as running or playing basketball.

Nevertheless, a little exercise can be fun and it's really worth the effort. Unless you overdo it and hurt yourself, the truth is that *everyone* feels pretty good after a nice long walk or bike ride or pickup game. Even walking the dog or climbing on the playground or playing tag can make you eat better, sleep better and feel better. As long as you're moving your body around, it's all exercise, and it's all good.

How does it help?

Everybody's body is made to be put into motion. That's why it's made up of bones and muscle instead of, say, foam rubber. Foam rubber can sit still for hours on end, but bones and muscles aren't designed to be flopped into a chair next to a stack of DVDs. The more you sit around, the more your muscles will get flabby, your joints will get stiff, and you'll start getting more tired—and probably gain weight, as well.

Exercise also helps improve your attitude. If you sit around long enough, you'll start feeling irritable and cranky, and probably have trouble sleeping. But when you move your body around, you help your brain release good chemicals called endorphins and make more serotonin—both of which can put you in a good mood and help you sleep better. You'll also increase your energy, improve your appetite, and feel less tired throughout the day.



Just do...something!

The hard part about exercise is simply deciding to do it. The easy and fun part is figuring out what to do. Everybody knows how to do something that's enjoyable *and* is good exercise. You could, for instance, set up a dog-walking business. Swim in a pool with your friends. Go for a hike. Ride your bike around a lake. Even cleaning up your room helps!

Don't worry if you think you can't exercise because of pain, illness or weight problems. Just check with your doctor, and get an evaluation to see which types of exercise might work for you. Even if exercise is a little harder for you than for other kids, you'll find that the more you do it, the easier and more fun it gets. And every little bit counts!



Children's
HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

**For more information call 612-813-7888
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