

# Fit Families Have Fun!

Making exercise part of your family's everyday life won't just keep you and your child fit—it can bring you closer together, too. When you work out as a family, you create memories and healthy habits to last a lifetime. Check out these easy ideas to make fitness enjoyable.



## Play backyard games

Playtime is exercise time! Kick up some fun with these games for the whole family.

### What the ball says

Write activities on separate pieces of masking tape, and stick them all over a basketball. *Examples:* "Do 20 jumping jacks." "Hop on one foot for 30 seconds." Take turns bouncing the basketball to each other on a hard surface. Catch it, and everyone does the activity nearest your right fingertips.

### Silly stop and go

One person is "It," and the other players form a straight line across from him (15–20 feet away). Their goal is to be the first to touch It. When It is facing them, they have to freeze (if they move, they're out). When It turns his back, they can go forward—but only in the way It announces. He might say, "Crawl like an ant" or "Walk like an elephant," for example. Whoever reaches It first wins and takes his place.

### Reverse hide-and-seek

In this game, only one person starts out hiding, and all the other players search for her. When a player finds her, he has to hide with her. As more people find the "hider," they may need to squeeze into the hiding place. The game ends when all the players have discovered the hiding spot.



### Simon says, "Sports charades"

For an active version of Simon Says, try this: "Simon" calls out sports moves to act out. He might say, "Simon says, 'Hit a

baseball'" or "Simon says, 'Throw a football.'" If he gives a direction without saying "Simon says" ("Swim in the pool") and a player does it, that person is out. The last one in becomes the new Simon.

### Freeze-dance contest

Grab your music player for this game. One person turns on the music, while the other players dance to the beat. When the "DJ" stops the music, players have to freeze. If you move, you're out. *Idea:* The DJ can award the best dancer for each round, explaining why that person was chosen. She may say, "Abby did the best twist" or "Zach had the coolest moves."

## Try something new

Experimenting with a new sport is often easier for kids if they're with someone else. Consider these ways to branch out:

- Look into programs at your neighborhood community or recreation center. They might have clinics, sports leagues, or open gym nights for families where you could try out roller hockey, Ping-Pong, or volleyball.
- You may be surprised by what's available—and what interests your kids—at nearby parks. Ask about introductory classes or ongoing programs for activities like paddle boarding, kayaking, flag football, or wheelchair baseball or softball.



*Tip:* Need equipment? Check out used sports goods shops, yard sales, or equipment swaps organized by local sports leagues.

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## Terrific triathlon

A traditional triathlon is a race that involves swimming, biking, and running. Your family can put together your own version using three different activities. You might twirl a hula hoop 30 times, jump 10 times, and run up and down your block 3 times. The first to finish your triathlon is the winner. Then, you could think of three new activities, and have another race!



## Go on active outings

When planning family outings, look for opportunities to add in exercise.

### Park and a movie

Before or after seeing a movie, go to the park to play. Take along a Frisbee, volleyball, or bat and ball—and a healthy picnic—for an active twist on the traditional movie and dinner.

### Local hikes

Visit a nearby nature center, and choose a trail to explore. To make the hike more of an adventure for your children, have them predict the birds, animals, or plants they might see along the way. They can draw pictures or make lists of their predictions. During the hike, they could check off any they see and add others.



## A kid-friendly home gym

Use household items to create an in-home fitness center that is just your child's speed. Here are suggestions.

**Note:** You don't need a big room for your gym—part of your basement or a corner in your family room or youngster's bedroom will work just fine.

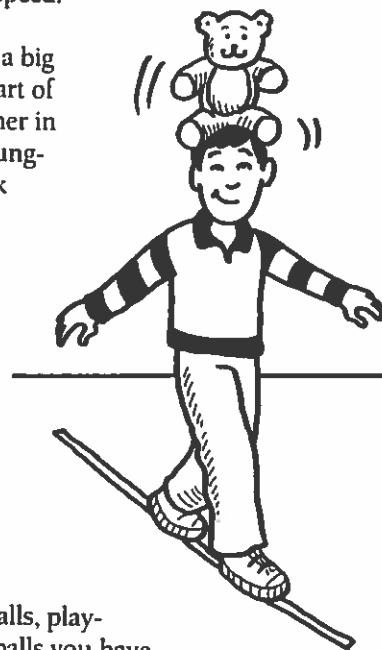
**Jungle gym.** Instead of steel, lay out boxes to crawl through (cut off the ends).

**Pop zone.** Save the bubble wrap from packages to make a popping zone. Your child can run in place and pop away!

**Ball toss.** Put bouncy balls, playground balls, and other balls you have around the house into the "gym." Toss balls back and forth to each other, or bounce them against a basement wall.

**Recycled toys.** Use outgrown toys for gym equipment. For instance, your youngster could make exercise "stations" with stuffed animals (toss a stuffed giraffe in a bucket, walk a line while balancing a teddy bear on your head).

**Floor moves.** Together, make cards for "abs" (abdominal, or stomach) exercises. On separate index cards, write instructions and draw stick figures doing exercises like sit-ups, bicycle crunches, and planks. *Tip:* Round up a few thick blankets or towels to use as mats.



### Museum tour

History, science, and art museums are great places for learning—and walking. Start off by taking a brisk walk through the whole museum. You'll get a good overview of the museum while enjoying some exercise. Another idea is to walk all the way around the outside of the building. Often, there are outdoor displays as well.

*Editor's Note:* Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

# Nutrition Nuggets™

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