

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISE

Apart from exercise's important physical benefits, exercise also:

- Helps children ease worries. Exercise is a distraction that breaks the cycle of negative thoughts that feed anxiety and depression.
- Helps children cope in a healthy way. Doing something positive to manage anxiety or depression is a healthy coping strategy.
- Exercise is also a good stress reliever. If a child is having difficulty sleeping, concentrating or with friendships, exercise can relieve some of the stress.
- Helps children gain confidence. Meeting exercise goals or challenges, even small ones, can boost self-confidence.
- Helps children develop social skills such as sharing, taking turns, cooperating and learning about winning and losing.
- Helps children get a sense of belonging as they do things with other children, either in casual or organized activities and sports.
- Helps families when parents exercise with their children or when parents support their child's sport.
- Helps children's memory improve. Exercise enhances the brain's metabolism resulting in better brain function.
- Helps children's concentration level. Active children have the ability to concentrate much better, even at the end of a long school day.

Tips for keeping your child active

As a parent, you can help shape your child's attitudes and behaviors toward physical activity. The word "exercise" may conjure images of running laps around the gym, but exercise includes a wide range of activities that boost activity levels to help improve mood. Biking, playing tag, dancing and other fitness activities that get the heart pumping can help, but so can walking, yoga and bowling. Here are some ways to help your child remain active:

- Set a positive example by leading an active lifestyle yourself.
- Make physical activity part of your family's daily routine by taking family walks or playing active games together.
- Give your children equipment that encourages physical activity.
- Take young people to places where they can be active, such as public parks, community baseball fields or basketball courts.
- Be positive about the physical activities in which your child participates and encourage them to be interested in new activities.
- Make physical activity fun. Fun activities can be anything your child enjoys, either structured or non-structured. Activities can range from team sports or individual sports to recreational activities such as walking, running, skating, bicycling, swimming, playground activities or free-time play.
- Encourage your child to find fun activities to do on their own or with friends and family, such as walking, playing chase or riding bikes rather than watching TV or playing video games.