

What We Learned Today

Fitness is Fun

Being active is key to the health of both children and adults. The more children learn to enjoy physical activity when they are very young, the more likely they are to become active adults.



During today's ChildcareAlive! activity, your child learned why it is important to be active, and what it feels like when they have been playing actively (heart beats faster, may sweat a little bit, feel a little tired, etc.). They also participated in some fun activities that got their bodies moving!

Why is Active Play Important?

For adults to stay healthy, regular exercise is very important. A child's form of exercise is called "active play," because fitness should actually come through routinely playing hard.

While active play is important for proper growth and to maintain a healthy weight, there are also many other benefits to a child's active play:

- Builds communication and social skills
- Improves sleep patterns
- May lead to improved academic performance

Children who are older than 2 years old need at least 60-120 minutes of active play each day, while toddlers need at least 60-90 minutes of active play each day. Play should be outdoors as much as possible, if weather allows.

Fun Ways to Move

Most children love moving, we just have to help them move in safe and appropriate ways.



In general, children love to climb, crawl, run, jump, swing, tumble, and twist. Try these tips to help your child enjoy active play:

1. **Take it Outside.** Children are usually more active outside, so take them out as much as possible if the weather is appropriate. When the weather is not suitable for outdoor play...
2. **Play Music and Have a Dance Party.** Turn on some upbeat music and dance with your child!
3. **Use Household Items.** Turn rolled up socks and laundry baskets into a game of basketball, or use a kitchen towel as a dance streamer.

Top 5 Ways to Be An Active Family

1 Plan Ahead and Set Specific Activity Times. Having a plan can make activity goals easier to achieve. Determine times during your week when the family is available, and devote a few of these times to a fun, physical activity, like going for a walk or playing at the park.

2 Plan for All Weather Conditions. Choose and plan some activities that do not depend on weather conditions. Some examples include indoor dance parties, mall walking, or active video games (limit video games and screen time to less than 1 hour/day).

3 Start Small. Try adding one new family activity, and add more when it seems that the whole family is ready. Take the dog for a longer walk or play outside for five minutes longer to start.

4 Use What is Available. Physical activity doesn't have to require lots of expensive equipment. Participate in activities that require little equipment, such as walking, jump rope, playing tag, playing catch, or dancing.

5 Treat the Family With Fun Physical Activity. When it's time for the family to celebrate, do something active as a reward. Plan a trip to the zoo, an amusement park, or the lake to treat the family. *Read more activity ideas at choosemyplate.gov*



Healthy Recipes to Keep You Moving

Spanish Macaroni

Ingredients:

- ½ lb lean ground beef (90% or more)
- ½ green pepper, chopped
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2 cups water
- 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
- 1 (28 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 1 ½ cups macaroni, not cooked
- 1 Tbsp chili powder



Directions:

Cook ground beef in a skillet. Drain fat. Add all other ingredients and mix with meat. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover. Cook on low heat until macaroni is done (about 10-15 minutes). Stir a few times during cooking to ensure macaroni does not stick to the bottom of the pan. Makes about 4 servings.

Source: "Now Serving: Tasty and Healthful Meals on a Budget"
Available at: www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition
North Dakota State University Extension Service, www.ndsu.edu/eatsmart

Black Bean Quesadillas

Ingredients:

- 1 (16 oz) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup chopped tomato
- 8, 6-inch whole wheat tortillas
- 4 oz Colby Jack cheese, shredded
- 32 spinach leaves, shredded



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Mash beans. Stir in tomato. Spread evenly onto four tortillas. Sprinkle with cheese and spinach. Top with remaining tortillas. Bake on cookie sheet for 12 minutes. Cut into wedges and serve.

Makes about 8 servings.

TIP: Add pre-cooked shredded rotisserie chicken for extra protein.

Source: "Now Serving: Beans"
Available at: www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition
North Dakota State University Extension Service, www.ndsu.edu/eatsmart