



# HealthyFun

“Make fitness a game,  
and you’ll have kids  
coming back for more.”

— Peter Kositsas, health coach  
and father of two



## Get Moving!

Fitness experts share tips and strategies for making exercise fun for everyone in your family **By Leslie Garisto Pfaff**

**I**N AN IDEAL WORLD, every family would have its own fitness coach, someone with the training to create a custom plan and the energy to inspire kids and weary parents to be more active. Unfortunately, in our frequently overscheduled lives, that task generally falls to Coach Mom or Dad. And while some parents are just more naturally athletic, most of us — let’s face it — have difficulty enough motivating ourselves to exercise, let alone our families. So we rounded up a panel of energetic family fitness experts, who jumped at the chance to show how simple it can be to pump up your family’s fitness quotient. Read on for their tips on injecting fitness into everyday life.

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### Everyday Fitness

As this research from the Medical College of Wisconsin proves, you don’t need fancy equipment to get your heart pumping — or work your muscles. For a surprisingly efficient workout, just do some chores. (The energy expended doing each activity will vary from person to person.)

**To burn 100 calories, you can either:**

**Play tennis or rake leaves**  
for 20 to 25 minutes

**Walk a golf course or wash the car**  
for 20 to 25 minutes

**Do moderate aerobics or wash windows**  
for 20 to 30 minutes

**Do light cycling or stack firewood**  
for 15 to 20 minutes

For more activities and a personalized calculation of the energy burned doing each, go to [caloriesperhour.com](http://caloriesperhour.com).



# HealthyFun

**Make it fun** You can motivate an adult to work out (at least for a while) with the promise of better health or firmer abs. But when you're coaching kids, "you've got to factor in fun," says Peter Kositsas, a health coach who works with kids and families in Washington Township, New Jersey. "Make fitness a game," he says, "and you'll have kids coming back for more." Just don't push too hard. "If kids are getting bored with an activity, move on quickly to something else," reminds Phil Black, a father of three and creator of FitDeck Jr. (See "Decked Out for Fun" at right.)

**Let kids lead the way** Incorporate the things your child loves into a workout. If your kids like music, start weekly dance nights; if there's a bug enthusiast in the family, make insect hikes part of your routine. Kositsas, for example, tapped into his 3- and 6-year-old daughters' passion for princesses and came up with some basic stretching and strengthening exercises that he said would make them stand as tall as Cinderella and run as fast as Snow White.

**Encourage free play** It's what kids do naturally — riding their bikes, playing tag, throwing a disk around — and it turns out to be better exercise than team sports, which can have a fair amount of downtime. "If you watch kids on a playground, you'll see that they go all out and then rest," says Ron Jones, an Atlanta-based corporate wellness coach and father of three. This kind of play isn't just natural, he explains, it's also highly beneficial, boosting the metabolism and strengthening the cardiovascular system. In addition to their regular exercise, try to get your kids outside with some simple equipment and a playmate or two (maybe the whole family) at least three times a week.

## STUFF WE LOVE

### Decked Out for Fun

Created by Phil Black, a former Navy SEAL and father of three, FitDeck Jr. is a set of 50 cards illustrating kid-friendly exercises that can morph into more than 70 fitness games (\$15; available at [fitdeck.com](http://fitdeck.com)). Have your kids sample one of the pack's exercises, below, for a workout that won't feel like a workout.

**Gorilla Walk** To increase balance and lower-body strength, take 6 to 12 steps (depending on your fitness level) with your hands holding your ankles.

**High Knee Skips** To develop stamina and strengthen your whole body, skip 4 to 10 times raising your knees as high as your chest each time.

**Snow Angels** To increase upper-body strength, lie on your back with your feet together and arms by your sides. Make 5 to 15 snow angels on the floor, touching your hands above your head each time.



## SUCCESS STORY

### The Family That Runs Together

Two years ago, when then 9-year-old Matthew Lowry of Hickory, North Carolina, asked for permission to run in a local 5K race, his parents weren't sure he could go the distance. But he not only crossed the finish line, he also persuaded the rest of the family — Benjamin and Sarah, now age 13, Joshua and Luke, 10, and his mom and dad, Dana and David — to do the same. To date, the Lowrys have run in 19 races. Even 4-year-old Rachel joins in, racing alongside mom in the 1K "fun runs" that often

accompany the longer 5Ks. The kids love collecting the trophies and T-shirts, and everyone enjoys the thrill of being active as a family. Says David, "I like having something we can all share in and enjoy together, despite our different ages and athletic abilities."



**The Lowrys (clockwise from left): Joshua, David, Dana, Sarah, Benjamin, Rachel, Matthew, and Luke**



GET IN GEAR

## Equipped for Action

Want to get kids moving? Stock up on equipment that is so fun to use, they won't even realize they're exercising.

### Seize everyday opportunities

You'd be surprised at how many chances to be active are hiding in the average day. Instead of walking home from the bus stop, advises Sheela Calhoun, a mom and wellness coach in Hanover, Massachusetts, try skipping or racewalking with your kids. During TV time, make it a rule that everyone has to dance during commercials. And get the whole family in on chores like raking or washing the car. (Check out "Everyday Fitness" on page 51 to see how routine tasks stack up against formal exercise.)

**Get moving as a family** Our experts agree: the best way to get your kids — and yourself — energized about fitness is to make it a family affair. "Establish family rituals that involve physical activity, such as a weekend hike or kicking a ball around before dinner," says Cathy Moxley, author of *The Busy Mom's Ultimate Fitness Guide*. Carrie Myers Smith, a mother of four and fitness expert for the parenting site ClubMom ([clubmom.com](http://clubmom.com)), suggests making it a family goal to try a new activity — in-line skating, kayaking, rock-wall climbing — each month. Or, says Peter Kositsas, check out charity walks in your area and train together. (See "The Family That Runs Together" on page 52 for inspiration.)

### Help your child find a passion

There's a sport for every child, from soccer to archery. If possible, let your kids sample a variety of activities to see which resonate with them. But don't be surprised if they drop their "favorite" sport only to take up another with equal fervor. The point isn't to develop an allegiance to any particular activity, but to encourage a love of fitness that lasts a lifetime.

*Contributor Leslie Garisto Pfaff lives with her family in Nutley, New Jersey.*

USE THIS	TRY THIS
	<p><b>HULA HOOP</b> This popular toy gets the heart pumping while working the muscles of the mid-section and aiding coordination.</p> <p><b>Challenge</b> kids to a hula-hooping contest or check out our multiperson games at <a href="http://FamilyFun.com/magazine">FamilyFun.com/magazine</a>.</p>
	<p><b>JUMP ROPE</b> Whether in the boxing gym or the schoolyard, jump ropes strengthen the lower body while providing a cardio workout.</p> <p><b>Teach</b> your kids some old-fashioned rope-skipping rhymes (for suggestions, go to <a href="http://gameskidsplay.net">gameskidsplay.net</a>).</p>
	<p><b>MINI SPORTS CONES</b> These versatile cones can be used to make an obstacle course, a fitness circuit, or even goals for a backyard soccer game.</p> <p><b>Set up</b> a swerving speed course and see who can dash through it the fastest.</p>
	<p><b>MINI TRAMPOLINE</b> Designed to develop balance, strengthen lower body muscles, and get the heart rate up, mini trampolines are also kid magnets.</p> <p><b>Crank up</b> some tunes and get your kids jumping to the beat. If you've got the room, stash one near the TV to coax family members off the couch.</p>
	<p><b>FITNESS BALL</b> By adding a stability challenge to exercise, fitness balls work the core muscles around the pelvis and trunk that assist with balance.</p> <p><b>See</b> how long your child can stay seated on a ball with one leg raised, and progressing, if possible, to both.</p>
	<p><b>YOGA MAT</b> Simply having a mat around encourages kids to get down on the floor and start stretching.</p> <p><b>Teach</b> your kids some basic poses, such as downward-facing dog and the caterpillar. For easy-to-follow moves, check out <a href="http://yoga basics.com/asana/">yoga basics.com/asana/</a>.</p>

