

Family Living

Families and Fitness Rhythm and Chews

TIMOTHY GOWER

For some kids, trendy outsized shirts and baggy trousers may be hiding a growing problem for today's youth—flab. Consider some troubling facts:

Since the 1960s, the level of childhood obesity in the United States has increased over 50 percent.

Today, between 15 and 25 percent of schoolchildren in the United States are overweight, placing them at risk for heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

A recent report from the Surgeon General states that only about half of all Americans aged 12 to 21 exercise regularly; one-quarter get no exercise at all.

The Surgeon General's report also notes that children tend to become less active with each passing year. It's easy to blame the lure of TV and the Internet for turning kids into idle slackers, but the influences are far more complex. Budget-conscious school officials are cutting physical education programs. Some adolescents surrender their free time to after-school jobs. Many teens mysteriously forget that they own bicycles once they get a driver's license. Finally, exercise can fall victim to fashion, points out Mary Ann Hill, a spokeswoman for the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. "It just becomes the less cool thing to do," Hill says.

Be a role model for your kids

The Surgeon General recommends that all Americans get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day. Several studies have shown that children shape their attitudes about fitness by looking to role models—friends, siblings, and, yes, parents. You don't need to be a super jock to inspire a child to stay fit. Here's how three families got in shape together:

The five o'clock group

Kris Ackeret convinced her daughter Ericka, 13, to join the "Five O'Clock Group," a collection of Kris's friends who rise at dawn several times a week to race-walk through the streets of San Jose, California. Ericka caught on

quickly and now wins competitions. More importantly, says Kris, "exercise will always be part of her routine."

Hiking, biking, and jogging in Herndon, Virginia

Once a year, the Thibaults of Herndon, Virginia, go hiking in Shenandoah National Park. But staying active together is more than an annual event for the family of four. When Mike jogs, he's frequently joined by his daughter Michelle, 10, and son John, 8, who keep pace on bikes. Several days a week, Mary, 44, accompanies the kids on a brisk one-mile walk to school. The family swims and skis together, too. "You can't preach to them," Mary says. "Setting an example is the greatest teacher."

A father and daughter's crosstown walk

Chris Koehler challenged his daughter Katie to accompany him each night on his crosstown walk for one year. The reward: \$100. But for the Koehlers, of Hornell, New York, the money was soon an after-thought. "The walks became a great opportunity for us to have 45 minutes to ourselves," says Chris. After winning the cash, Katie, 11, kept right on walking with her dad. "And when I get older," she says, "I'll walk with my kids, too."

Five Fitness Tips For Families

• Warm up! Take a few minutes to stretch before any activity.

• Keep safety in mind. Wear appropriate headgear or pads when cycling or skating. (Moms and dads, this also means you.)

• Let a different family member pick their favorite activity for the whole group to do together each week.

• Buy a notebook and use it as a fitness diary. Record how long or far each family member walked, ran, or cycled each day.

• Stick to a schedule. Make regular physical activity a part of your family's daily routine.

Lunch-time Concerts at the Children's Museum

Pack a picnic lunch and join us for this free concert series in Lair Hill park, adjacent to the Children's Museum. We'll feature kid-friendly performers in 30-minute shows, starting at 11 A.M.

and noon. Many of the concerts will showcase different cultural traditions within our community. Related hands-on activities and resource materials will also be part of the program.



Baba Wague Diakite, a master storyteller will delight all with traditional tales from his native Mali, West Africa. Drumming and dance help make the legends come to life. He will be performing on Thursday, July 15 from 11 AM and NOON through the Children's Museum.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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Festival's Rides Inspected

PORTLAND, OREGON — Portland's Waterfront Park is a monument to nerves of steel and iron stomachs. Carnival rides that thrill and terrify are a big part of the Portland Rose Festival's Pepsi Festival Center. Safety inspector Joe Bixler has to make sure that NO disasters occur during the festival. Bixler says after each ride is "completely assembled, he and his staff do a full control-check and R-P- M-check, to make sure it's safe." He says any problems usually are the result of vibrations during the long truck-rides between events.

Fishing Derby

The Urban League of Portland's annual Fishing Derby and Picnic for seniors will be held on Friday, June 18th, 1999 at Warren Dock, Scappoose, Oregon, 10:30 am to 4:30 pm. Buses will depart from the Multicultural Senior Center, located at 5325 NE Martin Luther King Blvd. at 9:30am. Transportation is \$3. Space on the buses is limited. There will be a fishing derby, games and prizes, and a picnic. For more information, call 248-55470, ext. 24545.

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