



*Here's a simple prescription
for good health which
doesn't involve exercises
or workouts at the gym*

Family activities, many centered
around the pool, keep the
Richards clan happy and fit.

PHYSICAL FITNESS CAN BE FAMILY FUN

By **BOB RICHARDS**
Former Olympic Pole-Vault Champion

WHEN I APPEARED on the "Jack Paar Show" not too long ago, the conversation turned to physical fitness and comic Johnny Carson remarked: "Push-ups? I can't do one of them." The audience quaked with laughter as he went into a 20-minute monologue about how completely "out-of-shape" he was.

I confess I laughed as heartily as anyone else, but actually too many Americans disparage physical fitness. They assume that it means the bulging muscles shown in body-building ads.

But that's not it at all.

Physical fitness can affect your whole perspective on life. A man who feels "in the pink" physically can do more work and adjust to situations better than his neighbor who is physiologically sluggish and run-down. It has been my experience that a sickly, out-of-shape person is a person struggling socially, economically, and in almost every other way.

I lecture throughout the country on fitness. After one of my talks in a large city, a portly man in his

late 30s approached me and said, somewhat truculently: "It must be nice to get into the kind of condition that you suggest. I wish I had the time. Personally, after 10 hours at the office I'm bushed. And if I did traipse off to a gym, my kids would hardly ever see me." As a glum afterthought, he added: "Besides, it's no fun getting into shape."

Without realizing it, he had summarized the "arguments" against fitness. Most of us hold relatively sedentary jobs, and attaining physical fitness in our leisure time can be hard work—and time taken from our families if we make it so.

I've discovered, however, that physical fitness can be a family project—for Mom, Dad, and the kids—and what's more, it can be great family fun. I don't suggest that families should become private gym clubs. But by planning family activities which everyone enjoys and which are healthful, too, we can all attain physical fitness—and as a bonus, a closer-knit family. There are countless activities that meet these requirements.

At my house, for instance, a rainy day is the

signal for tumult. From the noise, passers-by might think that mayhem is being perpetrated. Actually, we're roughhousing, and we all end up in a howling mass of twisted arms and legs.

Surprisingly, though, roughhousing is more than fun. It's great exercise, using nearly every muscle in your body.

Another family project with the twofold objective of fun and fitness is bicycling. The whole family gets outdoors to places the family car will never take them. In some cities, cycling can be dangerous, but even if the bikes have to be tied onto the back of the car and transported to a safe area, the dividends in fun alone make it worthwhile. And you'd be surprised how much a weekly bicycling party can do for your health.

PROBABLY the best all-around conditioner is swimming. It exercises every muscle in the body. Most FAMILY WEEKLY families have access to a beach or a pool during the summer months, but many don't take full advantage of this blessing.

It can be a lot of fun to play water polo or tag as a family unit—much more fun than sitting in a beach chair, half asleep. Swimming races with the children (with the proper handicap, depending on relative ability) are another fine way to have both fun and exercise. Perhaps a relay race against the family next door can be planned for the end of the season (a good reason for everyone to train).

Horseback riding is another activity in the "fun" category that helps body-conditioning. Some Saturday, rent horses for the whole family and go for a brisk ride. Once you've mastered the knack of riding properly, you'll be developing most of your muscles.

Hiking, hunting, fishing, camping—all potential family activities—are positive steps toward physical fitness. I don't mean automobile trips to some carefully supervised park with running water and all the conveniences of home. I mean off where you have to rough it a bit.

Any of the group-participation sports are good conditioners, too. Volleyball is one of the best, and the whole family can play—the neighbors, too, if your family isn't large enough. In Laverne, Calif., my home town, doctors, preachers, and lawyers tried volleyball and, to their astonishment, they got such a kick out of it that they're now getting up at 6 a.m. to get in a rousing game before starting their workday.

Many games considered too "childish" for adults will pleasantly surprise. There's no loss of dignity in riding a bicycle with your children or playing a game of touch football with them. These are not things to snicker at but rather to applaud.

Any athlete will tell you that getting into perfect physical shape for competition is a grueling business, but attaining good physical health can be fun if you use your imagination.

COVER:

Larry Stevens and Bob Murray took our exclusive cover photo of Mamie Eisenhower and report they've never seen her looking better. Why? Margaret de Mille answers in "My Friend Mamie" on p. 8.

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