

Online Resources:

Tips to keep your preschooler fit

(NC)—Weight gain is vital for young children to support health growth and development. It's also important for parents and caregivers to think about supporting their child's participation in physical activity along with offering nutritious meals. The early years are an important opportunity to develop a love for play that is both fun and active.

Childhood obesity is on the rise globally and research studies show that television viewing, plus computer usage and other screen entertainment are consistently and significantly associated with weight gain and a decreased level of physical activity.

Once school begins, so does physical education, but did you know that the time a child spends being physically active begins to decline as early as age three? Toddlers and preschoolers are naturally active but most parents are unaware of how important it is to engage them in simple, but vigorous physical activity every day.

A 2009 *Leger Marketing* survey of 304 Ontario parents showed that 65% spend less than one hour a day in active play with their toddler.

Respondents did recognize the value of play and activity however, with 76% saying it would be good to have more ideas on how to be active with their child. This same survey showed that most preschoolers watch an average of two hours of television every day—and yet 63% of the parents interviewed said they would like to reduce that amount.

“When my grandsons moved in with me, I was surprised to discover how quickly my six-year-old would get tired,” says a grandmother of two in Midland, Ontario. “We started going on adventure hikes together, gradually building up the distance over time. Now, those hikes are something the whole family looks forward to, even my little three-year-old.”

Have a ball together

As the parent of a young child, keep physical activity simple so that it is a regular part of your day. Plan time to do activities such as: dance to music; hop on one foot; or play games where you act like an animal. Choose activities that don't require transportation, special clothing, equipment, or registration fees. A website launched recently by the Best Start Resource Centre at Health Nexus illustrates several fun and easy ways to include physical playtime every day. Here's a snapshot of ideas good for this time of year from

www.haveaballtogether.ca :

During the fall season:

- ☑ Have a parade inside or outside using homemade instruments like beans in a jar, a wooden spoon and plastic bowl.
- ☑ Spread some blankets on the floor so you can tumble, roll, and balance.
- ☑ Invent silly names for simple physical activities and then do them together.
- ☑ Put on music and encourage your child to move to the music. When the music stops, call out *stop* and then start again.
- ☑ Rake the leaves and jump in the pile.
- ☑ Catch the leaves as they are falling. See who can collect the most yellow, orange or red ones.



- News Canada

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Nip child obesity in the bud

By J.C. Carroll

(NC)—When two to five-year old children discover entertainment on the television, their physical activity level decreases. Add this to computer games and children are soon discouraged from developing their own creative personalities. It is now evident that physical activity declines as screen time increases.

Parents may think their preschoolers keep fit naturally without vigorous physical activity, but health specialists say it is precisely at this developmental age that sedentary routines can become sedentary habits. This could lead to child obesity. Current data reveals that one in four Canadian children is overweight, an alarming fact that is mirrored not only in North America but also throughout developed countries. Chronic illness such as type 2 diabetes, early cardiovascular disease and a shortened life span are the equally disturbing consequences.

Too many hours watching television and other hi-tech toys continue to contribute to childhood obesity – and yet experts tell us that preschoolers, given a choice, prefer human fun-and-play, especially with those they love.

Last spring, *Leger Marketing* surveyed 304 parents of preschoolers in Ontario and concluded that while 93% of parents agreed they were “a role model for their children” and 85% agreed that “the habits taught now will last a lifetime”, still only 66% agreed that they did indeed provide “a good role model for activity and physical activity”.

Be an activity hero

Initiating some vigorous playtime every day gives children attention and excitement with lots of laughs together. Good parenting examples set children on a healthy, lifelong path with quality time they will always remember.

At www.haveaballtogether.ca, parents and caregivers can access countless ideas on how to consistently add energized activities to daily routines, like dancing to music, crawling under and over each other, or setting up an obstacle course. The website, launched by the Best Start Resource Centre at Health Nexus provides information and useful tips.



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Fitness Quick Tip:

Be your child's activity hero

(NC)—A new website is giving parents and caregivers quick and useful information for keeping their preschoolers fit. With child obesity on the rise—plus statistics pointing to sedentary behaviour beginning as early as two years old—this online resource (www.haveaballtogether.ca) shows how simple it is for parents and caregivers to add fun and activity to every day routines. Run, jump, dance, or set up an obstacle course for your child. Here's a snapshot of other ideas for this time of year:



- ☑ Have a parade inside or outside using homemade instruments like beans in a jar, a wooden spoon and plastic bowl.
- ☑ Invent silly names for simple physical activities and then do them together.
- ☑ Put on music and encourage your child to run. When the music stops, call out stop and then start again.
- ☑ Rake the leaves and jump in the pile.
- ☑ Catch the leaves as they are falling. See who can collect the most yellow, orange or red ones.

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