

Fitness Activities by Age

There's a big difference between family fitness activities that work for babies and those that work for teens. As kids grow, their needs and abilities change, and so does your family schedule. But one thing remains constant: When you share active play together, everyone benefits.

Activities for Babies and Toddlers

When kids are very little, they often love to just go along for the ride. For example:

- Strap your baby into a carrier and go for a long walk
- Take them on a run in a jogging stroller
- Let them watch you do yoga at home

Your goals now: Find ways to fit fitness into your new-parent life, and set the stage for active living with your baby. You're a role model from day one.

Once your child can walk, you can encourage physical play with simple activities like:

- Going for walks or hikes (without the stroller)
- Visiting playgrounds that are toddler-friendly
- Dancing and playing music at home
- Using ride-on toys

If you enjoy parent-and-tot movement or water safety classes, great, but they're not essential to your child's development, so don't worry if they're not your thing (or your kiddo's).

Your goals now: Provide lots of opportunities for your toddler to move, and start introducing them to the fitness activities you like.

Activities for Preschoolers

As your child grows, you can share more active play together: swimming, art projects, exploring the outdoors. If your child attends preschool or daycare, be sure its policies promote physical activity. Your preschooler is learning lots of essential motor skills as they play, and they need your help to master them. Your example and simple instructions ("use the side of your foot to kick the ball") will go a long way.

At this age, your child is a little too young for organized sports, but they may be watching others play (especially other kids) and trying little-kid versions of sports gear and toys.

Your goals now: Make active play an important part of every day, and show your child that fitness is fun.



Activities for School-Age Kids

When your child hits the elementary school years, you will have more opportunities to really share fitness activities. They may be interested in trying the sports you enjoy. If you're a runner, for example, you can sign up to do a 5K together.

Kids also like discovering new things with you. You can learn something together (martial arts is great for mixed-age classes) or let your child teach you what they're learning in gym class or sports practice. Silly games—like the ones you played when you were a kid; think sledding, jump rope, and kickball—are almost always a hit with kids and are surprisingly fun for grown-ups too.

Your goal now: Make physical activity a shared family priority. It's an ideal way to spend your time together.

Activities for Tweens and Teens

At this age, your child's schedule will often dictate what you do with your free family time. If your tween or teen is into sports, your role is to support them and help them do their best, and this includes role modeling healthy physical activity.

If your child doesn't enjoy organized sports, you can help them find another fitness activity that they do like. Better yet if it's something you can do together! Fitness offers many opportunities for shared family time during the teen years. Try:

- camping
- rock climbing
- hiking
- running
- biking
- playing catch
- frisbee or frisbee golfing
- playing table tennis
- taking a yoga or other fitness class

Your goal now: Set your tween or teen up for lifetime participation in sports and fitness. How? By making time for it, making it important, and making it fun!



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