

EXERCISE for the Whole Family

by Jillian McAfee

School's out for summer! No more teachers, no more tests and no more homework to worry about! You're able to kick back and relax during the summer months but try not to get too comfortable. I recommend dedicating this summer to learning about your health and experimenting with different types of physical activities.

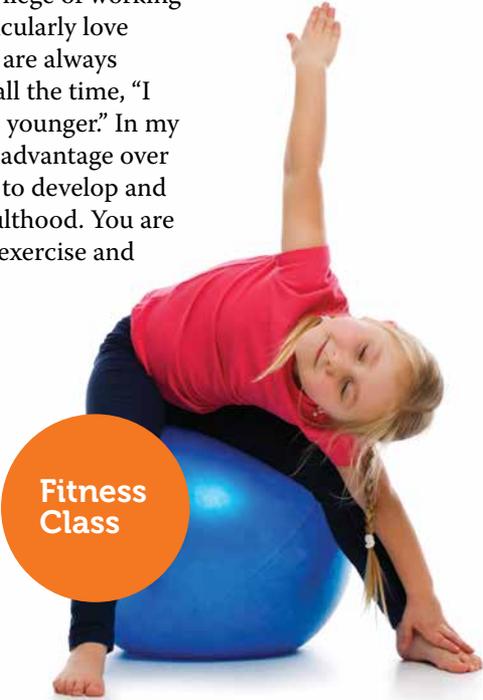
Physical Activity and Health

Physical activity can have numerous benefits for your health and well-being. It makes your muscles strong, your heart and lungs more efficient and your mind happier. Living a healthy lifestyle can be challenging at times, but surrounding yourself with people who have similar goals as you can be a huge help. Talk with your family members about their health, and encourage them to increase their physical activity with you!

As a personal trainer, I have the privilege of working with people of all age groups. I particularly love working with children because they are always eager to learn! I have adults tell me all the time, "I wish I started exercising when I was younger." In my opinion, as a child, you have a great advantage over adults because you are in a position to develop and continue healthy habits through adulthood. You are able to experiment with all types of exercise and hopefully find your niche.

Set Goals

Make it your goal to try numerous types of exercises with your family this summer. You should not be alone in this journey. Encourage the ones you love to participate with you!



Fitness
Class

Here are some ideas:

1 Dance the Day Away

It's time for a dance party! If you are feeling tired or lazy, music and dancing can be serious mood boosters. Turn on your favorite tunes and bust a move with your friends. Take turns giving each other the spotlight and cheer for each other!

If you are interested in taking dance lessons, you can find beginner classes in your community and try all different kinds. Whether it is hip hop, jazz, tap or ballroom, dance can be an awesome form of exercise (that doesn't always feel like exercise).

2 Play Outside

There are so many options for outdoor play and many are forgotten because of video games, computer games and other forms of technology. Play tag, jump on the trampoline, or take turns jumping over the sprinkler. One of my favorite activities as a kid was setting up an obstacle course using items such as jump ropes, cones and the trees in your yard as landmarks!

3 Try Different Fitness Classes

Many gyms have programs for kids in the summer. Take the time to try new things! If structured sports, like volleyball and basketball, aren't your favorite, try a fitness class at the gym such as kickboxing, cardio dance, kids' yoga or Pilates.

4 Work on Your Swimming Skills

If the water is unfamiliar territory for you, ask to enroll in swim lessons. Swimming is a wonderful low-impact form of exercise that works out your entire body. You don't have to swim laps to get a good workout though – create relay races with your siblings!

5 Hop on the Bike

Cycling is a great form of exercise for the whole family. Go for a bike ride around the neighborhood after dinner or find some cool trails at local parks. Make sure that you and the people you ride with practice good bike safety rules and wear a helmet.

6 Wear a Pedometer

It is recommended to walk 10,000 steps each day, however, set a goal that is doable for you at this time. Keep track of your family's progress and create a reward system for the members who have reached their goal. If you are having trouble reaching your step goal each day, work on creating the habit of taking your dog for a walk or walking a certain distance with your family each day.

7 Summer Reading

During summer break, many kids may not be eager to bury their nose in a book. If you are, however, looking for some fun reading materials, check out the health and fitness section in your local library or ask a parent to help you find a kid-friendly wellness Web site. It's never too early to start educating yourself about your body. Once you know the reasons why you need to exercise and eat right, you are more likely to want to stick with the healthy habits you are creating.

Dance



Jump Rope



Ride Bikes



Wear a Pedometer



Safety Tips to Remember

1. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water. Kids sweat less than adults and often drink less fluid during a workout because their bodies don't remind them to do so. Get into the habit of drinking before, during and after exercise sessions to ensure proper hydration.



Drink
Water

2. Warm-up before you start your exercise session to wake up your muscles and reduce your risk of injury. Suggested stretches before a workout are spinal twists, shoulder rolls, marches and leg swings.

3. Remember to take time to stretch after you exercise. Post-workout stretches include poses for the major muscle groups (quads, hamstrings, lower back and chest). If you need help thinking of stretches to do, you can search online or even find some fun tutorials on YouTube to follow along with.



Conclusion

After reading this article, I hope that you are inspired to try new forms of physical activity and exercise this summer. Exercise can change your life – have fun with it! Experiment with ways to incorporate exercise into your daily life that you enjoy doing. Don't forget to encourage your family members to join you in your efforts to improve your health and fitness! Set an example for your family to follow and have fun creating memories with them in the process!

About the Author:

Jillian McAfee is a Personal Trainer and General Manager of Downsize Fitness Chicago– a gym that is specifically designed to train individuals who are 50 pounds or more overweight. Jillian received her Bachelors of Science degree in Kinesiology at Indiana University and is a Certified Personal Trainer through the American College of Sports Medicine. The most rewarding part of her job is being able to see exercise change people's lives every single day.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



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LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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