



BE FIT and HEALTHY

Use these expert tips to give your kids a healthy boost – right now!



When it comes to looking after our children's well-being, exercise and nutrition play many roles, including helping to maintain a healthy lifestyle. "It is not enough to just tell our children that they need to eat right and exercise – we need to show them how. With sedentary lifestyles and obesity on the rise, eating healthily and getting regular exercise rates high in my family," says Christina Yap, manager and trainer at Jazzercise Malaysia.

Despite our busy schedules, try to spend an hour a day moving, says Christina. "You could start off with a brisk 20 minute walk in the morning, then do 20 minutes of energetic housework like mopping the floor or cleaning the windows, and finish off with 20 minutes of fast-paced shopping in a hypermarket, pushing your cart around." Christina shares the main benefits of regular exercise.

THE FIT ADVANTAGE

1 When you exercise, blood circulates to bring nutrients to all the organs and muscles. It gets your lungs working harder and your lymphatic system moving. Muscular movement stimulates lymphatic circulation and waste is transported to the major detoxification organs for elimination.

2 While resting, the heart pumps about 10 litres of blood per minute. Exercise increases this output, resulting in improved waste removal with more oxygen and nutrient-rich blood being delivered to all the cells.

3 As your body temperature rises during exercise, you'll start to sweat. This is the body's way of cooling itself. Plus acids and other wastes are flushed through the skin and reduces the load on your kidneys.

4 Exercise improves your digestion and elimination of food wastes. Cardiovascular exercise stimulates the abdominal muscles to help move food through the digestive tract. This movement helps to cleanse the colon, an important element in waste removal.

5 Leave no more than 48 hours between sessions so you continue to benefit from the enhanced metabolic rate. To get the maximum benefit of exercise, you should exercise cardiovascularly for 20 to 30 minutes per day, three to five times a week.

KEEP KIDS HEALTHY



The benefits of whole grains are becoming more well-known says nutritionist Dr Zawiah Hashim. "From their associated role in general health and wellness to weight management to prevention of certain diseases, the power of whole grains cannot be ignored. As you aim to increase your intake of whole grains, make sure your child is consuming appropriate amounts as well." Malaysian Dietary Guidelines recommend four to eight servings of grain foods per day, at least half of which should be whole grains.

A smart way to ensure children get a variety of foods in appropriate amounts is to use the Malaysian Food Pyramid as a guide. For school-aged children, one whole grain serving equals two slices of whole grain bread or a cup of ready-to-eat whole grain cereal. Here's how you can increase your whole grain intake.

- replace your white bread with whole grain bread.
- have a serving of whole grain breakfast cereal in the morning.
- substitute half the white flour with whole wheat flour in your regular recipes for cookies, muffins, breads and pancakes.
- take brown rice on its own or mix with white rice.

FAMILY WORKOUT

"Exercising together is a great time for parents and their kids to interact and have a bit of fun on the side," says Christina, a mother of three. She adds, "Turn on your favourite music and see if you can workout the combined sections till the end of each song."



ABDOMINAL WORKOUT

Sit on the floor with bent knees, facing each other. Your child's legs are placed in between yours while you clasp each other's elbows with outstretched arms.

Section A (Row Boat)

Sitting up tall, take turns to lean back. Then coming back to your starting position, lean forward as the other person leans back. Keep the body very lifted for maximum stretch and tone. This is a great abdominal workout.

Section B (Choo Choo Train)

Extend opposite arms, while pulling back the other. Torso will naturally twist thus working on the obliques, or muscles along the ribcage.

Do eight times of each move, then four, then just twice. Repeat till the end of the song.

Not sure how to get your family moving? Try these family fitness tips that are practical, inexpensive and enjoyable for children and parents alike, shares Christina.

- Look for places to exercise in your neighbourhood like a nearby park.
- Take walks or go cycling together.
- Try an action-packed vacation.
- Do household chores together.
- Take turns selecting an activity for the family to do together each week.
- Participate in adopting a river, park, or beach, and keep it clean.
- Buy toys that promote physical activity.

The most important decision you can make for your family today is to simply get moving. So, start limiting television and computer time, and try a family fitness activity instead.

DID YOU KNOW?

That popcorn is a whole grain. Try popping your own popcorn and sprinkling some parmesan cheese, garlic powder, or other less salty, low fat flavourings on top. Low-fat microwave popcorn is a good option too.