



Exercise!

This month in THE GREAT BODY SHOP, your child will learn about exercise and how it benefits the body. We urge you to reinforce the material by discussing it at home. The unit will be divided into four lessons:

- Lesson 1:** Types of Exercise
- Lesson 2:** Exercise for the Whole Body
- Lesson 3:** The Benefits of Exercise
- Lesson 4:** Routines for Safe Exercise

Consider This

“Many people believe that children are naturally active and fit. Yet . . . the adult fitness boom has failed to trickle down to our children. . . . Not long ago, it was widely believed that degenerative diseases (heart disease, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, etc.) begin in middle age. Now, we know that such afflictions have their roots in childhood. Participation in a regular exercise regimen is one of the best ways of lowering risk of degenerative disease.”

(From the National Children and Youth Fitness Study II, U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services.)

For your child's health, get him or her to engage in physical activity during the routine of their day. He or she should get 1 hour or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity every single day.

Encourage your child to walk to school or a friend's house rather than being driven, to play in the backyard after dinner, to invite others over for a game of catch, etc. You might set up a volleyball net in the backyard, take your children ice-skating instead of to the movies, and assign active chores such as raking leaves and shoveling snow.

Above all, limit computer games and TV time—they are the biggest factor in the trend toward sluggishness. Why not exercise as a family? Have your child join you for a brisk walk or a bike ride. Encouraging your child will help you get some exercise, too!

Charting Progress

Here's an idea: With your child, design a large poster with a blank square for each day of the month. Each day that your child exercises (for a total of an hour), note the activity/activities in the square. Try lots of different activities.

Give your child an exercise-related reward if he or she completes the month with the minimum requirement of exercise (4–5 times each week). For example, you might buy him a new T-shirt, take her bowling, purchase a new baseball mitt, or jump rope together.

Before Bed Stretches

Set aside 10 minutes before bedtime to do some bending and stretching with your child. (Keep movements nice and slow, or you'll get the child revved up—just the opposite of what you want to do!)

- Walk around the room on tiptoes. As you go, reach arms up to touch the sky; stretch arms out to the side; push them behind you and repeat.
- Sit on the floor. Spread legs out to the side, bend at the waist, and slowly reach over toward your right foot. Hold for five seconds, then sit up straight. Slowly reach over toward the left foot, then hold for five seconds. Repeat once more.
- Stand straight. Bend your right knee to lift your right foot to your buttocks. Grab the foot with your right hand. Hold 5 seconds. Make sure that knees point toward the floor. Lower leg, repeat with the left.

