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Beyond Gym Class—Parents Need to Get Kids Moving

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As the government and local policy makers do their political dances, we're sad to say they are probably getting more physical activity than our kids.

A recent [report](#) stated: Only 22 percent of public elementary school students go to a school that meets the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) standard of 150+ minutes of physical education per week.

The report also found that 75% of 3rd graders are only getting 60+ minutes of physical activity a week. This should be a wake up call. Sixty minutes is the minimum a child should get in one day.



Did you know that cardiovascular activity actually helps oxygenate the brain and prime it for better learning? So, playing could actually help your kid be a better student. Just ask John Ratey, MD, out of Harvard or take a look at the [Naperville](#) schools that have put physical activities at the forefront in junior high and high school classrooms. In Naperville, test scores are up 20%.

We can play the blame game all we want, but if we are relying on the government or the school to give our kids the time and resources to exercise during the school day, we're not doing enough as parents. Research shows that kids who are read to by their parents will develop better reading skills than if they only read in school. The same is true for fitness. Why not play and be active with them to teach them healthy living skills that can increase their longevity and quality of [life](#)?

[Think](#) about an average Tuesday night. What are you teaching your kids about the importance of physical activity?

Parents		Kids
Come home from a long day at work	vs.	Come home from a long day at school
(which for most people is sedentary)		(tried to listen and sit in chair for most of the day—sedentary)

If we are lucky, we sit together and eat dinner

Watch TV or do more work	vs.	Play video games or do homework
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Okay, hopefully life is not that mundane every single night, but this is an average day for many Americans.

We all understand that homework has to get done—and sometimes an hour of TV is part of the deal. So, here are some suggestions to keep the your time with the kids active:

1. Take breaks between the math and reading and stretch
2. Use the commercial breaks to do two minutes of fitness
3. Get a cheap stationary bike and set it up in front of the TV
4. When you're out shopping with the kids, take the stairs whenever possible

Finding the time to demonstrate the importance of physical activity can be hard. Throw a lack of parks, bad weather, [safety](#) concerns, cost and many other factors into the mix and adding physical activity into a day can be a real challenge.

But figuring out how is really important. Start by setting an example. Ask yourself, do I walk when possible or do I take the stairs? Their little legs will follow you.

The key is to make physical activity part of kids' daily routines—like brushing teeth and doing homework. And, as we've seen, exercise isn't part of the routine in most schools. It's on us as parents to set a good example and prioritize kids' fitness. You may not have control over how much kids move at school, but you can make sure that when your kids are home they have the chance to get their 150+ minutes.

Check back next week for ideas from these two dads on how to get active with kids—no matter what barriers you face.

Photo via [Dark Dwarf](#)



Joel Grant, BHK, CSCS Sr.
Manager, Exercise
Physiologist



Ari Levy, MD, Co-CEO

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10 Responses to *Beyond Gym Class—Parents Need to Get Kids Moving*



Caitlin Costello

April 6, 2012 at 2:42 pm

I love the idea of 2 minutes of fitness during commercial breaks. It would be funny and therefore be another way of bringing the family together. What kid wouldn't want to lead their parents in 2 minutes of physical activity?

[Reply](#)

Stacey

April 6, 2012 at 2:52 pm



Simon says "Do 15 jumping jacks while singing your favorite song at the top of your lungs!"



Catherine Theodorou

April 6, 2012 at 3:02 pm

I grew up in a home whose parents did very little exercise due to work schedules. I got plenty of exercise because I had siblings and friends who loved to be active.

[Reply](#)



Brenda Weiner

April 6, 2012 at 3:54 pm

Great job guys! How sad that 75% of 3rd graders are getting only 60 minutes of activity a week! They're kids and I know they want to be playing! 😞

I love the analogy of teaching fitness to kids is like reading to them to help better develop reading skills. Both involve a loving parent teaching their child this basic healthy lifestyle behavior. However, if the parent lacks the skill, they sure aren't able to teach it.

Kudos for charging parents to take ownership of looking for creative opportunities to fit in fitness where they can. Love the line, "Ask yourself...do I take the stairs? Their little lets will follow you" That's a PRECIOUS IMAGE!!

[Reply](#)



Tom Evers

April 6, 2012 at 6:05 pm

I couldn't agree more. Kids need to be getting this 60 minutes in gym class every day in elementary school, not just when they get to middle school and are already over weight or obese. And I love the stair suggestion. Another thing I recently started doing is to avoid parking in the closest spot at the grocery store or mall. Taking an open spot far down the row is another opportunity to get in some additional walking. Great article here guys.

[Reply](#)

Joel Grant

April 18, 2012 at 10:46 am



Parking farther away is a great way to get in a little extra activity each day. Surprisingly, you will probably save yourself extra time as well and a few dings on your car doors. The thirty seconds longer it takes you to walk to the front door of the store can be a lot less than the 5-10 minutes of stalking people to get that closer parking spot.



Tom Evers

April 6, 2012 at 10:33 pm

Couldn't agree more. Kids should be getting 60 minutes daily in gym class in the elementary grades, not just when they get to middle school when they are already overweight or obese. One thing I recently started doing is parking far away in the lot at the grocery store or mall. Making the kids walk further, stressing the added opportunity to walk/exercise multiple times per day. Great article – keep the good thoughts coming.

[Reply](#)



Adam

April 9, 2012 at 9:55 am

Love this idea and this article. With tight budgets, PE and recess are not seen as priorities and have continued to be reduced over the years. As an adult with more energy than I know what to do with sometimes, I recently watched a home movie of myself at age 9. Let me tell you, 9 year-old Adam makes adult Adam look like he been shot with a horse tranquilizer! I was exhausted just watching me go.

I had ample outlets to release my energy but I still struggled to sit in my chair and listen in class. I can only imagine the challenge to our youth today without such outlets. How wonderful if parents can prioritize their child's exercise, establishing healthy habits and enabling them to focus on their studies that much better!

Looking forward to your next installment...

[Reply](#)



Kara

April 16, 2012 at 11:01 am

This is so true! I have shared this blog with some teachers I know to include the link in the next parent newsletter.

As they always say, "do as I do, not as I say". I personally like this because I know when trying to inspire others under the same roof, I often find it provides accountability for myself. Thanks guys!

[Reply](#)

Work Out with Your Kids: We Take on the Top 5 Excuses

April 25, 2012 at 3:28 pm

[...] we recently discussed, our kids aren't getting enough exercise in school. The National Association for Sport and [...]

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Engaged Health Solutions

401 West Superior, Suite 401

Chicago, IL 60654

tel: 888.308.0365

info@engagedhealthsolutions.com

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