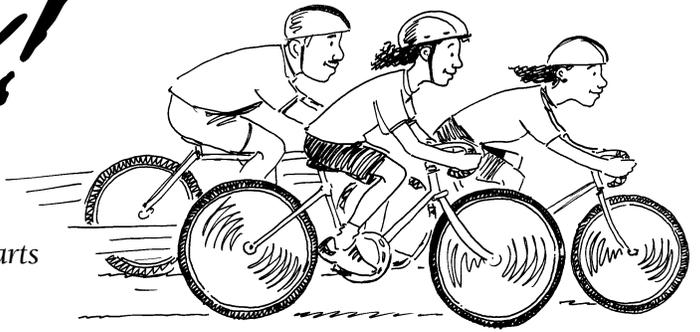


Be Active!

Keep moving year-round! Teenagers are more likely to stay active when they see their parents getting fit, too. So gather everyone together for activities that will build muscles, get hearts pumping, and increase flexibility—month by month.



JANUARY

Resolution rodeo

Make resolutions do double duty in the new year by choosing goals that involve physical activity. Consider these ideas:

- ◆ Spend more time together. Suggest activities that the entire family will enjoy, such as building a snowman, ice-skating, or playing tag.



- ◆ Keep the house straight. Set up a weekly chores schedule with at least one active task for each person.

Ideas include vacuuming, mopping, washing windows, dusting, and putting away clothes.

FEBRUARY

Healthy hearts

Show your family how much you love them by scheduling “family dates.” The only rule? No sitting still! You might try bowling or laser tag, or find an indoor pool or rock-climbing wall.

Some schools and community centers schedule a weekly open gym where your family can play basketball or volleyball. Also, some malls open early for walkers—you can take a brisk walk around on the weekend. Reward yourselves with healthy smoothies when the stores open.

If it snows, go sledding, slide down a hill in an inner tube, take a snowy hike, or go skiing or snowboarding if you live near any slopes.

MARCH

Step into spring

Look through newspaper listings for an upcoming charity walk. In the weeks leading up to the event, train together.



You can clock a route through your neighborhood with your car’s odometer, or use the track at your child’s school (four laps usually equal a mile). Walk the route as a family,

increasing your distance until you work up to the mileage you’ll be doing.

Even if you don’t sign up for an organized walk, you can make after-dinner strolls a family ritual. Or create a neighborhood walking club, and invite other families who have a child your youngster’s age to join you in getting fit together.

APRIL

Unplugged fun

Screen-Free Week is held every spring. Use it as an opportunity to give your child alternatives to television and video games (croquet, hide-and-seek, planting flowers). Focus on helping her find a special activity that she can continue even after the week is over.

You could encourage your teenager to revisit an old hobby—did she take gymnastics or play softball when she was younger? Maybe she could volunteer at a recreation center or with a youth league that teaches these sports to little ones.

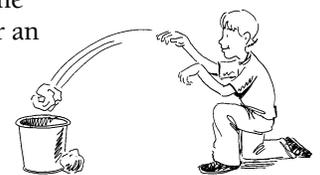
Or help your child develop a new interest by practicing sports skills as a family. For example, make a soccer-dribbling obstacle course in the yard, and take turns dribbling the ball through the course.

MAY

Workout weekends

Wake up to family workouts. Get everyone up 10 minutes earlier (set alarm clocks, put on music), and start the day with quick exercises. Try these 10-minute workout ideas: Do jumping jacks, run up and down the stairs, practice cheerleading jumps, or play trash-can basketball with wadded-up paper.

If it’s hard to motivate your teenager to get out of bed, offer an incentive (for instance, a weekend of early workouts earns a trip to the bowling alley or an extra turn with the car).



JUNE

Daylight saving

Take advantage of the longest days of the year by getting outside as much as possible. Here are several ideas to get your family moving:

- ◆ Enjoy a bike ride or a hike along a scenic trail. Wear backpacks, and take along a healthy picnic.

- ◆ Fly kites. Have one for each person so everyone keeps moving.

- ◆ Do outdoor chores. Mow the lawn, wash the car, or weed the garden.

continued

JULY

Water play

On a hot day, there's no place better than a pool! Encourage your teen to join the local swim team—practices and meets will provide plenty of exercise. Also, check your local parks and recreation department for classes in water aerobics or synchronized swimming.

Your child might also consider working toward a lifeguard certification. See if your community pool offers a course, or visit the American Red Cross website (www.redcross.org) to find nearby lifeguard classes. Once your teen is certified, he could be hired as a lifeguard, help coach the younger kids' swim team, or even give swimming lessons.

AUGUST

Pickup games

Organize your own neighborhood kickball or flag football league. Try to find two or three other families who are interested in a weekly game at the school field. You can break into teams of eight or more players (have about the same number of adults, teens, and younger children on each side).

Other ideas: Suggest that your child get a group to play street hockey on the school blacktop. Shoot hoops with your kids at the school or community center basketball court. Or hit tennis balls at a public court.

SEPTEMBER

Family exercise challenge

Does your child participate in physical fitness testing at school? You can set up your own family "test" at home. Pick a date at the end of the month, and encourage everyone to prepare by stretching,



running, and doing push-ups and sit-ups. During your family challenge, keep track of scores and times in activities like these:

- ◆ Stand with your hands against a wall, and see how many "standing" push-ups you can do.
- ◆ Put a hula hoop around your waist, and keep it going as long as possible.
- ◆ Throw a ball against a wall, and catch it as many times as you can.
- ◆ Do as many sit-ups as possible in one minute.

OCTOBER

Fall for fitness

Taking part in fall traditions will give the whole family a workout. Rake leaves or work in your garden. Before the ground freezes, plant bulbs (tulips, daffodils, crocuses) that will bloom in the spring. If you don't have a garden, you and your teen can volunteer to help with planting at a school or nursing home.

Another fun activity is to go to a local orchard to pick apples, and see who can fill a basket the fastest. Younger teens and preteens will still get a kick out of running through a corn maze, jumping on bales of hay, and making scarecrows at fall farm festivals.

NOVEMBER

You're on camera!

Stay fit indoors as the weather cools off by filming your own family exercise video. If you don't have a video camera, borrow one from a relative or neighbor.

Start with a warm-up of slow stretches, and cool down at the end

with more stretches. (For ideas, borrow a workout video from the library.) In between, have each family member choose a favorite aerobic exercise. Your son might do a drill he learned in football practice, or your daughter might have picked up a new move from dance class. Each person can teach the exercise to the rest of the family.

After practicing a few times together, you're ready to tape. You'll get plenty of exercise just preparing! Once the video is made, the whole family can use it to workout.



DECEMBER

Active gift giving

Give your family presents that encourage them to get moving.

A new pair of sneakers or hiking boots might motivate your youngster to take up running or walking. Consider a family gift of a YMCA membership so everyone can go to the gym or take sports and fitness classes. Or give your teen sports equipment, such as a basketball, inline skates, or a mountain bike.

Another idea: Get pedometers for everyone, and have a daily contest to see who can walk the most steps!

Editor's Note: Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

Teen
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