

Parent Communications— Physical Activity Theme

Adapted from President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2006, Food & Fun After School Unit 2 Parent Communications.

Newsletter article: Use this *Planet Health* article in your class or school newsletter. Think about publishing a *Planet Health* message each month to help parents and students tune in to healthy lifestyle choices and tune out of screen time.

Get Moving, Feel Great!

Feeling exhausted at the end of the day? How about the kids—do they just want to flop in front of the TV? Physical activity can get everyone feeling better.

Daily physical activity can help you reduce stress, feel more energetic, and have greater concentration. It also helps you keep a healthy weight, and it protects you from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and osteoporosis (weak bones). Studies show that regular physical activity even helps children do better in school.

How much activity do children need? Children need to be active in play for at least 1 hour a day, spread out in bouts of 10 to 15 minutes each. For children over 12 years, their activity should include 20 minutes of vigorous activity at least 3 times per week. This includes activities that make children breathe hard and sweat.

Try the following tips for keeping your family active:

- Set up a routine of regular physical activity for yourself, even if it's a simple walk after dinner.
- Limit TV time in the house—for everyone—to 2 hours, maximum.
- Enjoy active time together as a family at least once during weekends.
- Make sure that your children have opportunities for active play after school hours. This can be in your yard, at a local park, or in sport and recreation programs.

Children who grow up in an active family are more likely to remain active as adults. As a parent, you model the values and attitudes toward physical activity and other types of lifestyle choices. Set a good example by keeping yourself active and by encouraging your children to find activities they enjoy. For more ideas on how to activate your family, check out www.verbnow.com and www.bam.gov.

Optional table:

Fun Ways to Stay Active

Examples of moderate activity	Examples of vigorous activity
Games: hopscotch, four square, dodgeball, capture the flag, playground play	Games: running and chasing games (tag), jumping rope
Sports: soccer goalie, baseball outfielder, bowling	Sports: basketball, soccer, jogging, lap swimming, cross-country skiing, cycling
Recreation: dancing, walking, bike riding	Recreation: aerobic dancing, mountain hiking

E-mail message: Use this sample e-mail message to send *Planet Health* messages home to parents.

Subject: *Planet Health* Tips for Parents: Get Moving!

Dear Parents:

This month our class will use the *Planet Health* curriculum to explore the concepts of (insert curriculum goals here), using physical activity as a case study. Here are the key health messages:

- Be physically active every day.
- Find activities that you enjoy doing so that being active is fun.
- Being active helps you feel good and stay healthy. It even helps you focus on your schoolwork.

Our goal is to engage students in regular physical activity in a manner that encourages all children, regardless of their abilities. You can support this goal by reinforcing the key messages and by following these *Planet Health* tips for parents:

- Be a good role model by getting regular physical activity for yourself.
- Provide opportunities for your children to be physically active every day—or at least on most days.
- Make physical activity a fun way for your family to be together. Try to plan at least one fun physical activity together on weekends—walking, bike riding, basketball, or whatever. You decide!
- Limit screen time (TV, computer, video games) to a maximum of 2 hours per day. Be prepared to suggest activities that your children can do instead.

Want to learn more? Parents and kids ages 9 to 13 can visit www.bam.gov or www.verb-now.com (both from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) for ideas for games and activities to play.