

# EXERCISE

Everyone needs to **EXERCISE!** In addition to promoting weight loss (or maintaining a healthy weight), physical activity increases stamina, flexibility and muscle strength. Regular exercise also relieves stress, anxiety and mild depression (kids get stressed too!).

- ◆ **LIMIT TELEVISION, VIDEO AND COMPUTER GAMES.** Have children (and adults) earn TV time: exchange an hour of exercise for an hour (or a half-hour) of TV viewing.
- ◆ **BUY THE "STUFF".** Choose birthday or holiday gifts that promote activity, such as rollerblades, frisbees, a bike or scooter (don't forget the helmet), or a softball and glove.
- ◆ **BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL.** If children see that you are active and having fun, they are more likely to be and stay active. Bike, or walk to the post office or convenience store instead of driving. Walk up the stairs instead of taking the elevator in the mall. Park at the far end of the parking lot at the supermarket. Take an exercise class.
- ◆ **PLAN CELEBRATIONS AND VACATIONS AROUND ACTIVE PLAY.** Instead of movies and a pizza party, plan a party at a bowling alley, miniature golf range or a roller rink. Take your family vacation (or plan a day trip) where there are walking or hiking trails, find a river where there is canoeing or rafting, or swim in the ocean waves.
- ◆ **MAKE EXERCISE A FAMILY AFFAIR.** While gym class and recess provide some exercise time during the school day, parents also need to provide opportunities for physical activity. Take walks, bike rides or hikes together. Put music on and dance instead of watching TV after dinner. Everyone can do yard work, wash the car or help with the house cleaning. Reward accomplishments with praise and healthy treats.
- ◆ **MATCH THE ACTIVITY TO THE CHILD.** While some children enjoy organized team sports, others prefer individual sports such as martial arts or tennis. For non-competitive children, exercise can still be fun: biking, swimming, rollerblading and dancing will contribute to overall fitness. Remember ... *physical activity* is any movement that uses energy - jumping rope, playing tag and walking the dog are exercise too!



**SOMERVILLE-RARITAN-MANVILLE  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**