



BEING ACTIVE

THE FACTS

- Almost 25% of children do not participate in any free-time physical activity.¹
- Daily physical education participation in schools is at an all-time low of 28%.²
- More than half of American children watch three to five hours of TV each day. Often, TV viewing replaces physical activity, and kids are inundated with commercials that advertise unhealthy, processed foods.³
- Almost one third of high school students do not meet the minimum recommended requirements for physical activity in a given week.⁴

CONSEQUENCES OF INACTIVITY

- The prevalence of obesity among children ages 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 25 years, going from 6.5% in 1980 to 17% in 2006. The rate among adolescents aged 12 to 19 more than tripled, from 5% to 17.6%.⁵
- Short-term consequences of inactivity include weight gain; long-term consequences include diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- Habits acquired in childhood often continue into adulthood, so children and adolescents who are overweight have a greater likelihood of being overweight or obese in adulthood.⁶

BENEFITS OF BEING ACTIVE

- Helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles.
- Raises the metabolism (the rate at which the body burns calories) and helps the body burn calories more effectively even when at rest.
- Boosts emotional health; increases our sense of well-being; relieves stress, anxiety, and depression, due in part to the release of endorphins, natural painkillers created by the brain.⁷
- Keeping up an exercise habit and reaching exercise goals promotes a sense of well-being and pride in kids.

ANTIDOTES TO INACTIVITY

- Lead by example by being active and eating well yourself. Remember, kids will do as you do!
- Make physical activity part of your and your children's daily routines by including fun and familiar activities: dancing, swimming, hiking, jump rope, walking the dog, playing games like soccer, kickball, and softball/baseball.
- Cut back on TV and computer in the home. Stick with this plan by creating a schedule for these activities for parents and kids alike.
- Incorporate fitness into the day by taking the stairs instead of the elevator; not looking for the closest parking spot at the mall; getting off the bus or train one stop earlier and walking.

¹ The Clinton Foundation

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

³ National Institutes of Health, *Word on Health*

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

⁵ National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

⁶ Freedman DS, et al. Relationship of childhood obesity to coronary heart disease risk factors in adulthood: the Bogalusa Study. *Pediatrics* 2001;108(3):712-718.

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical activity guidelines advisory committee report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008