

As summer break approaches, kids can be easily tempted into increasing their sedentary activities—surfing the Internet, texting friends, watching TV shows and movies, and playing video games. It’s important, however, to find a balance so that kids are doing both and getting the physical health benefits of regular exercise. Today, the Center for Disease Control says that 65.3% of kids are not meeting recommended levels of physical activity. Encourage your child to get active with these ideas:

- Talk to your kids about why exercise is important. Kids are more likely to do something if they understand why it’s good for them. See Encouraging Your Child to Be Physically Active from the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.healthychildren.org.
- Set a good example. Exercise with your kids. If that isn’t possible, model what you value by getting involved in some type of physical activity. Stick with it and talk about it.
- Encourage your kids to try different forms of physical activity. Exercise isn’t fun if it’s boring—or if it becomes a chore. Keep trying different types of exercise until your child finds something that interests her.
- As children get older, have them help out with physical chores that give them some exercise. Starting around age 6, kids can help wash the car. Middle school kids can mow the lawn and shovel snow. High school teens can help move furniture and do heavier yard work.
- Only 35 percent of young people meet physical activity requirements for health by increasing their heart rate and breathing hard for 60 minutes, five to seven days a week, reports the Centers for Disease Control. How often is your child getting a workout?
- Set clear guidelines. Make exercise part of your child’s daily routine. If your child doesn’t have time (or isn’t interested), cut back on video games and other sedentary activities. Learn more at www.parentfurther.com/blog/setting-boundaries-technology

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2007,” Surveillance Summaries, *MMWR* 57, no. SS-4 (2008).
2. www.healthychildren.org
3. www.parentfurther.com/parenting/sports-fitness