

VERB Actively Creating Active Children

CDC's VERB Campaign Offers Tips to Help Parents to Increase Physical Activity, Reduce Youths' TV, Video Game, and Internet Time

Concerns about childhood obesity and health have spread rapidly across the United States since studies showed that childhood obesity levels have doubled in the last 20 years and may lead to the first generation of U.S. youth to lead shorter lives than their parents as a result of obesity-related disease.

Dr. Janet Collins, acting director of the Division of Adolescent and School Health of the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), encourages a commonsense approach in fighting childhood obesity. As a starting point, Dr. Collins suggests parents visit www.VERBparents.com, a Web site developed by the CDC to support parents in their efforts to ensure their children receive at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. VERB is a campaign developed by health experts at the CDC to inspire children to get active and to provide parents with support in ensuring their children lead a physically active lifestyle. Celebrities and professional athletes, such as tennis U.S. Open champion Andy Roddick and NBA star Tracy McGrady, support the VERB campaign in its efforts to motivate every child in the United States to be physically active on a daily basis.

The following are Dr. Collins' 10 tips for parents to encourage their children to live a physically active life:

1. Convince your children that they don't need to be superstar athletes to enjoy physical activity. "There's a physical activity out there for every child, no matter their skill level," says Collins. "The important thing is to

get your children moving for at least 60 minutes every day, whether it's walking, biking, or simply playing outdoors with friends.”

2. If homework and extracurricular activities consume large portions of your child's day, leaving little time for 60 consecutive minutes of activity, then try to ensure they are accumulating 60 minutes of activity over the course of the day. Walk for 10 minutes in the morning. Shoot baskets in the driveway for 20 minutes after school. End the day by playing tag for 30 minutes after dinner. “By getting activity in small increments, your children will be able to work in sufficient exercise every day around whatever schedule works for your family.”
3. Enlist your local community's resources in helping your kids get active. “The local park district, local YMCA, or local Boys & Girls Clubs are almost always very accommodating in working with all types of household budgets,” says Collins. “If you're not sure about what's available locally, log onto www.VERBparents.com for information and encourage your children to visit www.VERBnow.com.”
4. Parents who are active have a tremendous impact on the way their children perceive physical activity, says Collins. “Parents who are active with their children have a tremendous impact on their daily lives because children tend to follow their parents' example — even if it's simply a daily walk either before work or in the evenings.”
5. Make physical activity an adventure that your children will enjoy. For example, instead of driving to the store or to visit neighbors, make time in

your schedule to walk or bike on various errands. “Of course we don’t always have time to do this,” says Collins. “But when time isn’t an issue, make a point of getting from point A to B by biking, rollerblading, **would make rollerblading a solid word** or walking instead of driving.”

6. “For those times when driving is inevitable, keep a ball or jump rope or Frisbee™ or anything else in your trunk that your children can play with in a physically active manner,” says Collins. “This way, no matter where you go, your children will be able to have some physically active fun.”
7. Adding an element of daily physical activity to family trips and vacations is a great way to set the stage for healthy habits.
8. In addition to placing emphasis on your children getting a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity every day, parents need to closely monitor the amount of time children spend in sedentary behavior. Experts suggest keeping the amount of time your children spend playing video games and watching TV to no more than 2 hours per day.
9. In previous generations, parents could rely on schools to offer a physical education curriculum that would provide daily physical activity. “Today’s parents should take an active role and advocate for a stronger presence of physical activity in school,” says Collins.
10. Support your children in whatever physically active endeavor they choose. “Even if you always loved baseball, your children may not,” says Collins. “So if they want to skateboard or dance or march in the band, parents

should be sensitive to their child's desires and help them achieve whatever they want to achieve in this endeavor."

For More Information About VERB

The integrated VERB™ campaign uses advertising, marketing, events, and partnership activities to ensure that campaign messages reach children whenever they are looking for something physical to do. Through multicultural media partnerships, the campaign is designed to reach children from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds – including specific outreach for African Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos.

For an overview of the VERB campaign, campaign activities, partners, physical activity resources, and the campaign press room and to look at the latest advertising, log on to www.cdc.gov/VERB.

Check out the tween Web site, www.VERBnow.com, to find cool activities, trendy games, and interesting activity tips. Also featured are fun polls and quizzes and a calendar of events. The activity finder is a great way to find out places to get active in your community and discover new VERBs to try. Tweens also can record their activity every day by using My VERB Recorder.

The VERB Web site, www.VERBparents.com, is a valuable resource for busy parents who want to learn more about the VERB campaign and the importance of physical activity. The site includes an activity finder for parents to learn about new activities and resources to find those activities in their communities.

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