

## **Parents Can Make a Game Plan to Get Children Moving**

### ***VERB Provides Parents with Resources to Combat Tweens' Sedentary Lifestyles***

When parents imagine an active future for their sedentary child, they most often picture a group of kids in numbered jerseys playing with a bat, a ball, or a stick. Because sports are often part of physically active lifestyles, many parents believe that traditional sports are the only option for increasing children's physical activity levels.

While today's kids can still participate in organized sports such as baseball, basketball, and hockey, they also can discover new activity options that their parents might not have tried, such as ultimate Frisbee™ or BMX biking. How can parents win when they're searching for physical activities to get their children moving? VERB offers three easy steps to success.

#### **Step One – Start by Talking with Your Child**

The first step for parents is talking with their children to determine their interest in physical activities and find out which are the most appealing. Children don't always understand what attracts them to a new activity, so parents can help kids discover which ones best fit their personalities and skill levels. Kids that are more social might enjoy being part of a large team, as with soccer, while shyer kids might enjoy practicing skills alone and then playing with a friend, as with tennis. By learning what their children like, parents can enable their kids to discover activities that are fun and cool.

Parents can start the conversation by encouraging their kids to make a list of activities they want to try, then setting aside a special time to talk about them together. Kids can visit [www.VERBnow.com](http://www.VERBnow.com) and take the Activity Personality Quiz, which computes their personality profile and suggests matching activities. Writing down their

interests helps kids focus on fun activities and provides parents with a tangible reminder to help them begin researching programs in their area.

“Taking the first step of talking about the importance of physical activity and finding creative ways to get started helps parents enable their kids to participate in the 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day that experts recommend,” says Dr. Janet Collins, Ph.D., acting director, Division of Adolescent and School Health, CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. “And for many children, sports are a great way to make physical activity a routine part of life.” The Youth Sport Coalition (YSC) of the National Association for Sport & Physical Education applauds the benefits of participation in sports and physical activity programs, which include enhancement of motor skills and social skills and the fun and enjoyment of physical activity.

### **Step Two - Actively Research Your Child’s Activity Choices**

It’s important for parents to learn about new activities their children want to try and help them get started. Research helps parents find out if the activity requires safety equipment, such as a helmet or elbow pads, and will also help a parent understand the activity well enough to talk about it with their children once they start getting active. If a child wants to participate in a sports or activity program, parents should research the program’s philosophy before signing their child up to participate. Solid programs will explain their approach with policies addressing these questions:

- Do all children get to participate, regardless of ability, gender, or race?
- Will the program develop fair play, teamwork, and sportsmanship?
- Is there an emphasis on having fun?
- How does the program address communication between coaches, officials, parents, and participants?

Answering these questions gives parents a clear understanding of how the program operates and what the program's goals are. Parents can investigate the program's safety elements and learn how many coaches or instructors will be on hand for the children. Helpful recommendations for researching formal activity programs are available to parents in a YSC brochure<sup>1</sup> located at [www.aahperd.org/naspe/resource-choosing.pdf](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/resource-choosing.pdf).

### **Step Three - Use Local Sports Organizations and Activities**

VERB is a great resource for new activity ideas and provides information on where to get active. Parents can log on to [www.VERBparents.com](http://www.VERBparents.com) to use the VERB Activity Finder to quickly locate local sports and activity organizations. If searching for local soccer teams, parents can scroll through the finder and select U.S. Youth Soccer Association (USYSA). Clicking on the name takes parents directly to the USYSA Web site directory, where they can find their state association. The VERB Activity Finder also provides quick and easy access to youth tennis, football, golf, baseball, and basketball associations that parents can contact to learn more about local athletic leagues or sports camps. Parents can use the finder as a resource for planning family activities, such as locating trails for hiking, mountain biking, and cross country skiing. The finder is also an easy way to locate community organizations that parents can contact to learn about classes and other physical activity offerings, including YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and Special Olympics.

By taking these three easy steps, parents empower themselves and create a positive atmosphere for communicating with their children about getting physically

<sup>1</sup> Choosing the Right Sport or Physical Activity for Your Child," Youth Sport Coalition, 1999.

active. “Using a positive approach allows parents to be proactive in helping their children discover physical activities and sports to try,” says Collins. “When kids take to an activity, it becomes their very own VERB, so that getting physically active isn’t a task,—it’s fun.”

### **For More Information**

The national, multicultural VERB campaign uses integrated marketing techniques to inspire children to get physically active and to provide parents and other influencers with support in ensuring their children lead a healthy lifestyle. Through multicultural media partnerships, the campaign is designed to reach children from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds – including specific outreach for African Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos. In 2003, the Kid Power Xchange, an organization that honors, recognizes, and promotes the most innovative Kids Marketing Campaigns, recognized VERB as the Non-Profit Winner for Best in Youth Marketing.

Log on to [www.cdc.gov/VERB](http://www.cdc.gov/VERB) to view the campaign pressroom, to look at the latest advertising, or for an overview of the VERB campaign, campaign activities, partners, and physical activity resources.

The Youth Sport Coalition of the National Association for Sport & Physical Education (NASPE) produced the brochure “Choosing the Right Sport of Physical Activity Program for Your Child,” available at <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/resource-choosing.pdf>. NASPE seeks to enhance knowledge and professional practice in sport and physical activity through scientific study and dissemination of research-based and experiential knowledge to members and the public.

Sidebar:

**Being Active Makes Every Child a Good Sport**

What if your child says “no” to sports? If your daughter’s schedule is filled with violin lessons, can it also include volleyball? When your son sits out from the basketball team, does that mean he’ll never dribble again?

When a child isn’t involved in sports, that doesn’t mean he or she must close the door on physical activity. For children to live a healthy lifestyle, experts recommend 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day, but that physical activity can include anything from shooting hoops in a friend’s driveway to rollerblading through the park. Regular physical activity in childhood improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and self-esteem, and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Each day’s hour of physical activity can be made up of a multitude of actions, such as walking home from school with friends or riding bikes for fun – instead of crossing a finish line. VERB is making it fun for kids to track each day’s actions with My VERB Recorder. Tweens can access the recorder at VERB’s Web site for kids, [www.VERBnow.com](http://www.VERBnow.com). When they type in their sports or non-sports activities they’re entered into a sweepstakes to win fun, activity-oriented prizes, including a bicycle and a virtual-reality snowboard.

There is no stronger force than parental support for motivating children to live active and healthy lives. Whether children are involved in sports or participate in other activities, it’s important for parents to support their child’s interest and keep the focus on fun. With parents’ continued support and motivation, children are the ones who win.