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# Physical Activity and Health

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## The Benefits of Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can help:

- Control your weight
- Reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease
- Reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome
- Reduce your risk of some cancers
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Improve your mental health and mood
- Improve your ability to do daily activities and prevent falls, if you're an older adult
- Increase your chances of living longer

Youth who are regularly active also have a better chance of a healthy adulthood. Children and adolescents usually will not develop chronic diseases, such as heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, or osteoporosis, according to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. "However, risk factors for these diseases can begin to develop early in life. Regular physical activity makes it less likely that these risk factors will develop and more likely that children will remain healthy as adults." Exercise is also important for growing bones and developing muscles.

So what's a parent to do? Starting from a very young age, we need to encourage our kids to be active, have fun in physical pursuits, and promote their confidence in their abilities.

Make exercise a family affair. Physical activity is more than the gym and classes. Dancing, walking or riding bikes with your family provides great physical activity opportunities, and is a great way to spend time with your loved ones.