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As a parent, guardian or grandparent, you can make a difference for the children in your life. Give them an early start in active play, and you set them on the path to a happy childhood and a lifetime of healthy living!

Here are five tips to help you -- and the children in your life -- get moving!

5. Move every day

Make physical activity part of your day. With your child, try getting off the bus one stop earlier and walking the rest of the way, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

Also look for downtimes during the day that you can use to get active. You can sing an active song while waiting for an appointment or go for a family walk after dinner.

4. Be creative with physical activity

Lessons or sports teams aren't the only way children can get active. You can use community resources like playgrounds and parks.

Dollar-store skipping ropes and balls can be used for many games... along with household items like laundry baskets, bed sheets and sponges.

A game of Simon Says... singing head, shoulders, knees and toes... or a round of freeze dance can be played almost anywhere! Just make sure the space is free of tripping hazards so children can be active safely.

3. Allow time for active play

Let children play freely without adult direction. Encourage your child to use their imagination to make up their own games and activities.

Children should explore play both inside and outside. Did you know that children are more active when they are outside? Take advantage of the weather and let your child play in the snow, jump in the leaves or dance in the rain!

Playing outside may need some extra planning. Make sure your child is dressed for the weather so they will be comfortable playing outside. In the winter, this includes wearing layers, hats and gloves, and boots. In the summer, this includes wearing a sunhat, using sunscreen and having drinking water available.

2. Make it fun

Make sure physical activity is fun. If your child is enjoying themselves, they will want to continue being active! Let your child choose the game they want to play or the equipment they want to use. Also try lots of different activities, games, and sports so your child can find what they enjoy.

Also remember that timing is key. Because children have short attention spans, make sure activities take place in short bursts with lots of variety.

1. Remember: you have an important role to play

As a role model, your child looks up to you! Set the example of an active lifestyle and join in when your child is being active. Remember that your children depend on you to be active... and if you're worried about your skill level, you can learn with your children! This will give them many positive memories for years to come!

Also remember to be positive, enthusiastic... and provide plenty of encouragement.

Give your child an active start and they will be more likely to lead a healthy and happy life!

For more information, tips and activity ideas, visit haveaballtogether.ca