



# Growing Up Healthy & Active

## February

### Parents Can Help Make Physical Activity Important and Fun

Parents who exercise tend to have children who exercise, but researchers caution that it's not something a parent can count on. Although it seems common sense that active parents should raise active children, kids still rank fun first.

A recent study asked whether parents tried to use their own activities as examples for their children to follow, or whether they helped children get to physical activities. Fathers who were more physically active had daughters who were more physically active. Although mothers in the study had almost no physical activity, they had no impact on the activity of their daughters.

Fathers who were active, who explicitly used their own behavior to encourage behavior, and who provided logistic support for their daughters' activity had daughters who were more physically active. It is possible that fathers are especially good at motivating daughters, but it might also be that mothers simply were not active. Even when mothers handled the logistics, it didn't seem to raise their effect on girls' participation. Moms who showed up but who weren't physically active could be giving their daughters a mixed message.

It makes so much sense that, if kids see active parents, they'll be physically active too. But a poor environment for physical activity can negate the

value of a good example from a parent. A poorly handled sports program, a mean coach, or a harsh school physical education teacher can turn kids away from physical activities.

Fun is Number 1. The problem for kids is that fun itself is down the list of activities they feel they need to do. Play is being replaced by other "necessary" activities. Parents' schedules may not provide a good example. As there is a decrease in physical activity among adults, there is growing inactivity among children. Parents need to value physical activity and let their children know of its value.

### Recipe of the Month: Carrot-apple Side Dish

1½ cups diced carrots  
½ cup water  
¼ cup packed brown sugar  
1 tablespoon margarine  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 cup diced apples  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
2 tablespoons cold water

In saucepan, cook carrots in ½ cup water until crisp; drain. Add brown sugar, margarine, lemon juice, and cinnamon; mix well. Stir in apple. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Combine cornstarch and cold water; stir into carrots. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 1 minute to thicken. Simmer, uncovered, for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Makes 4 servings.

### Just Do It—Get Active

- Go walking at an indoor site.
- Create a handmade Valentine and deliver it to your special friend.
- Create a snowman or a snow fort.

### Dieting Moms Influence Young Daughters

Researchers have found that fathers influence children eating fruits and vegetables and mothers influence daughters' attitudes about weight loss. Mothers who constantly diet give their daughters a different understanding about body image than mothers who accept their size and shape.

Using positive, health-promoting strategies, such as increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and increasing physical activity can have a positive effect on both mothers' and daughters' health and weight status. Mothers are role models in helping daughters growing up fit and healthy.

### For More Information

Visit these ISU Extension Web sites:

*Nutrition*—[www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/)

*Answerline*—[www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline)

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