



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

YMCA Healthy Kids® Day COMMUNITY NEWS FEATURE ARTICLE

Families Who Make Play Part of Every Day Will Reap Benefits

Demands of work, school, homework and never-ending to-do lists often make play time a luxury that does not always make it into the daily schedule. But experts agree that making play a priority brings a multitude of benefits for kids, including improved health and emotional well-being and increased positive academic performance.

“Families are under increased stress and struggle to balance work, family and health and to find supportive communities,” says Neil Nicoll, President and CEO of YMCA of the USA. “More physical activity through play helps children and parents better manage stress, succeed in school, reduce frustration, build energy and, most of all, learn skills that encourage a lifetime of activity.”

Recent studies suggest children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. As many schools reduce their focus on physical education and activity in order to meet academic goals, it is increasingly important that families ensure their children’s physical activity needs are met. YMCA experts believe it is important for kids to enjoy a balance between structured activities or sports and relaxed free play and offer the following tips to help parents put more play in their kids’ days:

- **Avoid TV, video games and computers for at least 30 minutes after school.** Taking a bike ride, walk or just playing outdoors not only gets bodies moving, but also helps kids decompress before homework time.
- **Lose the guilt and do not think of free play as wasted time.** Play is as much a part of a healthy day as eating nutritious foods and brushing teeth. A regular dose of play can boost test scores, self-esteem and metabolism.
- **Commit to spending time outdoors almost every day—rain or shine.** Just getting out the front door greatly increases the opportunities for physical activity through play.
- **Make play a part of family rituals.** Shooting hoops before dinner, walking the dog, taking a Saturday morning bike ride to the park gets everyone moving and provides great opportunities for building family connectedness.
- **Get creative and incorporate play into “necessity” activities.** Visit a park for 30 minutes on the way home from a doctor’s appointment; walk or bike to nearby errands like the bank or post office; crank up some music and engage the family in a Saturday morning clean-the-house dance party.

(more)

To participate in fun play activities in their own community, families are encouraged to take part in YMCA Healthy Kids® Day, Saturday, April 12, 2008. The nation's largest health day for children, YMCA Healthy Kids Day will bring more than 500,000 kids and families to 1,500+ YMCAs nationwide to "Put Play in Your Day." This 17-year annual event offers tips and tools to help families work toward building healthier lifestyles together.

The YMCA of Darke County will have a health fair with developmental screenings by Help Me Grow, a bicycle safety course, free bicycle helmets as well as an open house and many activities for kids and their families. Also available at each event will be a free Healthy Family Home Starter Kit for parents, with tips for raising safe and healthy kids and free t-shirts for the first 50 kids. The YMCA of Darke County will be participating in the event on Saturday, April 12 from 12 to 4 pm and is sponsored by Wayne Hospital. For a complete list of participating YMCAs, parents should visit www.ymca.net.

Leading national companies dedicated to improving the health and wellness of American kids and families are joining with YMCA of the USA to support YMCA Healthy Kids Day events. Sponsors include the Disney Channel, Eli Lilly, Northwestern Mutual Foundation and Tropicana.

YMCA Healthy Kids Day also is supported by leading health organizations including the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, American Public Health Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors.

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