

# Developing Physically Fit Children

By Paige Roth, owner Iowa Gym-Nest

When I was growing up, I remember long summer days spent outside with other kids from the neighborhood riding bikes, climbing trees, playing tag and follow the leader. We'd leave home in the morning and not return until dinner time. Our parents didn't worry about us getting enough exercise or our physical fitness level. We were active playing and just being kids. Flash forward thirty years (or so) and that's not the case. My two kids are very content to sit inside playing video games, listening to music, or watching T.V...and I know they are not alone. According to government statistics, obesity rates among children ages 6-11 rose from 4% to 16% in the last 30 years.( ASPE RESEARCH BRIEF: Childhood Obesity By: Jennifer Bishop, Rebecca Middendorf, Tori Babin, Wilma Tilson) Lack of physical activity is one of the main reasons for this dramatic rise in childhood obesity. There has also been much research done that shows that children who are inactive grow into adults who are inactive. So what can we, as parents, do to help our children be more active?

1. Model a healthy lifestyle for your children. Get up and be active with them...take the dog for a walk, go for a bike ride, or hike one of the trails at Lake MacBride or the Coralville reservoir.

Children learn first and best by example, so if you embrace an active lifestyle your children will be more likely to do so also.

2. Set limits on sedentary activities. Give your children clear guidelines on how long they can be "plugged in" and then make sure to enforce those rules. Children need a minimum of 60minutes of physical activity each day to be healthy. If all of their time is spent on the iPad or in front of the T.V. that is not going to happen.

3. Schedule classes and activities that will help your children be physically active. Look for established programs that specialize in children's sports and fitness and have certified and trained instructors. These programs can help your child learn to enjoy fitness activities. Other benefits of these programs include:

<b>Following directions</b>	<b>Persistence</b>	<b>Following safety rules</b>	<b>Patience</b>	<b>Working cooperatively</b>
<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Resilience</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Coping with jealousy</b>	
<b>Character</b>	<b>Interacting appropriately with their peers and adults</b>			

The key to setting your child on the path to an active lifestyle is to make it FUN! So find those activities that your children enjoy and encourage them to participate. They will be developing into stronger, healthier kids and you can have piece of mind that you have set your child up for success.