

4 Easy Ways to Seize Some Summer Fun

Being a role model for your children isn't always easy, but parents who find time to model active lifestyles can feel great about raising happy, healthy children. Getting active and fit this summer will help the whole family maintain a healthy weight, while building strong muscles, bones, hearts, and lungs. It will also help kids (and parents) sleep better at night. Make sure everyone - from grandparents to the family dog - gets involved in the heart-pumping fun. Remember, even a 10-minute burst of physical activity can help your entire body feel better and get fit. Here are four simple and inexpensive ways to seize summer fun - whether you have a few minutes or an entire day!

If you have only 10 to 20 minutes ...

Got a few extra minutes before work or before dinner is ready? Forget making a dent in the couch and be a real sport (rather than just watching them on TV!). Get your kids up and moving to the yard for a quick game of catch, Frisbee®, or old-fashioned tag. Put Fido on the leash and walk down the road - or around a block or two. Turn off the same-old news program - and turn on an *active* video game, such as Dance Dance Revolution™ or one of the Wii Fit™ options.

If you have just an hour or two ...

Forget another nap on the sofa and that DVD you've already seen. Energize your body and your relationship with your family at the same time. Get everyone to help you clean up the yard, then cool off with some sprinkler fun or a few trips down the old slip-n-slide. Yard already lookin' good? Grab the bikes, the helmets, and a few balls. Head off to your local park for some hoops, soccer kicks, tennis serves, golf putts, or a fast-paced game of folf (Frisbee® golf).

If you have a morning or afternoon ...

Don't be a weekend bore. Coordinate necessary errands, chores, and activities so that you have at least several hours for family fitness fun. Montana summer weekends are tailor-made for outdoor adventures and the Treasure State has natural options from border to border. Explore nearby treasures, such as local parks and river access points, for some walking, fishing, canoeing - and talking. Some of the best parent-child conversations happen when you are being active together.

If you have a whole day in beautiful Big Sky country ...

The possibilities are as vast as our prairies, as numerous as our mountains, and as varied as our lakes, rivers, and streams. Hiking, biking, horseback riding, and paddling are as close as Montana state parks, as well as national parks and historic battlefields. Make this the summer to leave no child inside - and discover how much fun the outdoors can be with a photo safari, a wildlife identification guide (bird, trees, or flowers anyone?), or a scavenger hunt for special rocks and minerals.

NEED MORE INFORMATION ON MONTANA PARK POSSIBILITIES? Check out the options online before you get in the car by visiting Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (<http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/searchparks.aspx>). It's easier than ever to plan a trip to Montana's park lands. At this site, you can search for a state park by name, nearest city, regional area, closest water body, activity, or facility - and learn about entrance fees, special events, and the quickest way to get there.

Real Montana. Real Close. Real Fun.