PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Regular physical activity is important to both physical and mental health. No matter your size, shape or age, an active lifestyle throughout your lifespan is one of the most important things you can do for well-being.

What is physical activity?

Physical activity includes any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting.

Walking, gardening, pushing a stroller and climbing the stairs are just a few examples of physical activity that are low in intensity. Exercise is a type of physical activity that is planned and structured for an extended period of time. Exercise often includes more vigor or intensity such as weightlifting, aerobic activity and participating on a sports team.

Why is physical activity so important?

- Strengthens bones and muscles
- Improves cardiovascular health
- Maintains or increases range of motion and flexibility
- Protects against certain health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, Hypertension, obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, colon cancer and depression
- Improves mental health and mood
- Improves cognitive functioning
- Protects against dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease
- Improves quality of life and ability to do daily activities
- Controls weight
- Increases energy
- Promotes restful sleep
- Reduces the risk of falling
- Contributes to longevity

There are many types of exercise and physical activity. Whether you’re just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break or fit enough to run a three-mile race, physical activity is for everyone, including people who are healthy and those who live with ongoing health problems or disability.
EXTENSION GET FIT YEAR-ROUND

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is offering a new and exciting exercise program! The Extension Get Fit Program is a community-based program, developed based on strength training research, and is designed to increase strength and flexibility at any adult stage of life or fitness level. This research-based program offers a variety of possibilities including the Strong Women and Men program and other routines. This program reaches all major muscle groups. Also, safety always comes first. Exercises may be tailored to each individual’s needs and fitness levels including a seated routine based entirely in the chair as an option. Extension Get Fit is safe, structured, and affordable. It is appropriate for all fitness levels, provides a supportive group environment, and its fun!

Several Extension Get Fit programs are being offered in Harrison, Bergman, Omaha, and Valley Springs. Come check out our program anytime. To find out more, contact the Boone County Cooperative Extension office at 870-741-6168.

GRANDPARENTING

Grandparents are more than just fun and games: your importance can’t be overstated. However, with the downfall of the extended family, surrogates have taken over many traditional grandparenting activities. For example: fast-food often replaces home cooking; family therapists help with family problems; and celebrities are heroes. Unfortunately, these surrogates do not love your grandchildren as you do. Caring and active grandparents can do all of the above — and do them much better.

Typically, parents are the most powerful people in a child’s universe. One parent typically means playtime; the other parent means business. However, grandparents typically are seen by children as being superior: a parent’s parent. It creates a sense of respect. But respect works both ways: don’t forget to treat the children with respect. Remember, a grandparent’s influence is overwhelming. Grandparents play many vital roles in the lives of their grandchildren. For example:

Protector

✔ Who can protect those precious children from the cold, cruel world? Grandparents. Kids know they can count on Grandma or Grandpa. Protection can be as simple as insisting on a nap — you are actually protecting them from fatigue. Making your children feel safe can also be complicated, as when World War III erupts in their own home. Then, you can comfort them over the telephone, remove them temporarily from the situation, and give them emotional support.

✔ When you are with your grandchildren, you protect them from strangers as well as hurt feelings. If they’re embarrassed to tell Daddy about the school-yard bully, you can take the matter into your own capable hands by talking it through with the child and discussing the situation with Daddy yourself.

Role Model

✔ To a granddaughter, her grandmother is the prime example of what a mature woman should be. Although she gets the basics from her mother, that relationship is fraught with other concerns. At times she will be prone to rebel from being cast in her mother’s shadow. You are the archetype. Help her standards be high.

✔ Have you ever heard the claim that the way a man treats his mother is a precursor of the way he’ll treat his wife? Let’s take this theory a little farther: if your grandson respects and values his grandmother, he is likely to do the same with other mature women. Your part is simply to be a good role model, so give him an example as reference.

Teacher

✔ You don’t need a degree in early childhood education to be a great teacher to your grandchild. Everything you do serves as an example of good conduct, starting with the basics. As a baby, your grandchild will copy the sound you make when you click your tongue. She’ll blow kisses after seeing you blow them to her. He’ll learn to talk by repeating your words.
Later on, things get a little more complicated. She will continue to learn by mimicking behavior – not just her parents’ actions, but yours as well. He will unconsciously begin to think along the same lines. Ethics and values, the most vital elements of a person’s behavior throughout his or her life, are learned early, and you are an excellent source for them.

You are also the best history teacher they’ll ever have. Children love stories. Tales of your experience in the real world teach them about that world in a direct, non-threatening manner. Your life is more glamorous than you might think, so describe it in terms of the big picture, adding details to make it personal and make history come alive for your grandchildren.

**Caregiver**

- An individual, such as a parent, foster parent, grandparent, or head of household, who attends to the needs of a child or dependent adult.
- Grandparents are caregivers, but the extent to which grandparents are responsible for caregiving varies.

**Three Types of Grandparent Caregivers**

- The “day care” grandparents. Focus on helping the child’s parent and on fulfilling their own needs. These grandparents tend to be least affected by their caretaking role because the children return home at the end of the day.
- The “living with” grandparent. These grandparents provide daily care for their grandchildren, but do not have legal custody.
- The “custodial” grandparent. They provide daily care and make the decisions.

No matter what type of grandparent you are, there is benefit in learning how to be an effective grandparent. Acknowledging that as a grandparent you have raised a child or children before, you have many experiences that are priceless. However, research has shown that methods we once were taught have now become outdated. For example, babies are now put on their backs to sleep instead of their stomachs – this reduces the risk of SIDS.

No matter what type of grandparent you are, enjoy your **Adventures in Grandparenting!**

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**What You Need to Know About the Safety of Your Food**

Foodborne illness is commonly referred to as “food poisoning.” It comes from eating or drinking a food or beverage that is contaminated with a disease-causing bacteria, virus, parasite, toxin or chemical. Seniors are a high risk population and need to be very aware of what causes foodborne illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that approximately 76 million Americans get sick and 5,000 die from it each year. To help prevent foodborne illness, we must be able to separate fact from fiction.

**Myth** – You can tell when food isn’t safe to eat because it looks and smells bad.

**Fact:** Food can look, smell and taste fresh but still contain harmful microorganisms (pathogens). Microorganisms that cause food to spoil are not the same as pathogens that cause foodborne illness, but food spoilage is a warning sign that conditions may be right for pathogens to grow in food, so throw out spoiled food.
**Myth** - Foodborne illness happens quickly, and it is caused by the last food or meal I ate.

**Fact:** Most often, illness occurs within one to three days after eating the contaminated food, but sometimes it happens within 20 minutes or in as long as six weeks. Therefore, it is difficult to determine which food actually caused the illness. You will have eaten a wide range of food, and any of these foods could have been the cause.

Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus  
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science