

## TIPS FOR CREATING ACTIVE FAMILIES

Active families benefit from increased physical health and also sharing more 'playtime' together, and that means more laughs and memories made. So how do you pry your loved ones away from their favourite touch screen devices and up off the couch? To help we have put together the **Bluearth Top Tips** below and also more detailed **age specific tips** for ideas to include in your family's schedule and discover the joy of moving together.



### Be part of the game

Kids love it when their parents are engaged and involved in playing with them, it is also a great way to connect and stay connected as a family. You don't need anything, just a sense of active play and a commitment to having fun.

Let your child lead, let them decide what you are going to do and how to do it.

### Be a role model

Kids who have active parents are 6 times more likely to be active themselves. 'Do as I do' is the message that children get.

If you regularly participate in active pursuits that you enjoy and let your kids see and hear how much you enjoy them then you're much more likely to have active children.

### Recognise and value effort and learning

Be interested in your child's play and exploration; ask what they have been doing and how it made them feel. Having these conversations helps children understand that learning is continuous and valued. Confidence and self esteem is developed when children get to experience success on their own, whatever the achievement.

### Being active is not about being sporty; think outside the square, outside the oval

Whether your child is interested in organised sport or not encourage other activities; walking the dog, riding to school, climbing trees, dancing or visiting the local park. Share these activities with another if possible. Be patient it may take a bit of trial and error before you get the right fit.

### Don't let your fears become their fears

Of course you want to protect your children and ensure they are safe however we also need to accept that exploration and curiosity is essential for their development. "Don't run so fast, don't climb that, be careful, you'll hurt yourself" – all reasonable messages at different times – but they can also build fear and make a child reluctant to take on a challenge, try new things or get outside our comfort zone.

### Make it part of everyday family life, include friends

Make activity part of the family routine; use active transport whenever you can, go for walks, focus family outings around being active. Kids also love to hang out with their friends, so welcome others into your home or take them to playgrounds. Have space for active play both inside and outside your home.

### Make it fun

Make sure the focus is on making it fun and recognise everyone's participation. Children love to play and it doesn't require specialised equipment just some space and a positive attitude. Get them to move like animals - to stretch like a cat, run like a tiger, or jump like a kangaroo. Walk without making a sound.

## Activity ideas for children and families

- The physical environment of your house will either promote or discourage activity. Consider the layout, furniture and fittings with this in mind. What outdoor space do you have for play, a basketball hoop, a trampoline or cubby hut?
- Notice the number of labour saving devices such as remote controls, in your house and make practical changes.
- Dress for activity – put your running shoes on before heading out as a family and if the occasion arises for an impromptu walk or detour past your favourite local park, you're good to go!
- Create a brightly decorated 'activity box' to collect any ideas that you or your family have to get active. When you feel like moving, just open the box and sort through your options. Or, for those who want to mix things up a little bit, randomly select an activity from the box of suggestions.
- If you need to sit, try sitting on the ground. (For most of us – if you can't sit comfortably on the ground, it's only because you don't. This reminds us of the age old adage "If you don't use it – you lose it".
- Explore your local environment, parks, bike trails, rebound walls, play spaces, walks. Get to know as much as you can about everything within 1km of your home.
- Create a family play-list of everyone's favourite music and have a dancing contest. This one is guaranteed to get some laughs.



### Limit screen time

The Australian National Guidelines recommend that kids get no more than two hours of screen time a day whether that's watching TV, surfing the Internet, or playing video games.

Keeping screens in shared spaces in the house can help you supervise screen time, but you probably also need an agreement with your children around sedentary and/or screen time. Children under two should avoid screens altogether.

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WE GET OLD BECAUSE WE STOP PLAYING.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW