

Health & Fitness Resources for Children that can Promote Mental Health

Younger Children of All Ability Levels

Children's workout with Coach Scott

- This is a 25-minute motivational cardio workout. It reminds kids to drink water, warm up, and engage their muscles.
- The video reviews safety information for working out and begins with an easier workout followed by higher intensity cardio.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhCMOC6GnrY>
- Encourage your child to complete the video. You can use the music in the video for motivation or you can also play background music your child enjoys at a volume that still allows your child to hear the coach's instructions.

Healthy foods flashcards

- It can be difficult for young children, especially young children with developmental or learning delays, to understand healthy eating concepts. However, the more exposure they have to healthy foods, the more likely they are to develop better eating habits. Ultimately, children will eat what is available at home. If unhealthy foods are not as accessible, at least not when they are in the home environment, then they will be able to get the nutrients they need from the right foods during meals at home.
- Print out these flashcards (https://www.cacfp.org/files/9515/3549/7135/ABCs_Fruit_and_Vegetable_Cards_cacfp.org.pdf), which contain a variety of healthy foods. The pictures are colorful and appealing, which is great for kids, and each food has a corresponding recipe.
- Allow your child to pick a food and then help them prepare the recipe that goes along with that food item.

Adolescents of All Ability Levels

Healthy eating tips for teens

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx0ZTy2SWfk>
- This short video gives a good introduction about the food mistakes that teenagers make.
- It explains why it's important to eat well and the foods your teen should be eating every day.
- Encourage your child to watch the video and then discuss changes he/she can make to their diet

- The video emphasizes what your teen should include in their diet. Unhealthy foods are mentioned, but the point is that if your teen is eating fresh fruits and vegetables, they will have less room for the unhealthy foods.
- A good rule of thumb for your teen is to first make sure they get the right servings of fruits and vegetables every day and once they have accomplished that, they can have something else that might not be as healthy. Prohibiting unhealthy foods can be difficult for teens to adhere to; therefore, try to focus more on what they should be eating rather than what they should not be eating.

Food quizzes

- This activity includes a series of 5 quizzes your teen can take to test their knowledge about healthy eating and the quantities of various types of foods that they should be eating.
- There are 5 quizzes total that provide the correct responses after the child makes his/her selection.
- <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/quiz>

At-Home Activities:

Exercise for kids should be fun. Instead of "working out," think of it as "exercise play."

Get those feet up and off the ground for easy exercise that kids will want to do. Jumps build muscle strength, cardiovascular fitness, and endurance. Fun jumps for kids to try include:

- **Jumping Jacks:** stretch arms and legs out to the side like a starfish while jumping, return arms to sides and legs to center on landing
- **Tuck Jumps:** bend knees and lift heels high while jumping
- **Hurdle Hops:** jump side-to-side or front-to-back over pretend hurdle
- **One-Foot Hops:** lift one knee and jump on standing leg; alternate (this is a great balance challenge too!)
- **Criss-Cross Feet:** jump straight up, then cross one foot in front of the other; on next jump, switch feet and continue

To make exercise more fun for kids, turn it into a game. Here are some ideas from BOKS instructor Ewunike Akpan.

- **Squat Relay:** Have kids line up on opposite sides of the room, facing each other. On "go," all kids run toward the center of the room and meet in the middle. They do three squats, giving each other a high-five with both hands in between each rep. Then they return to the starting point and repeat. The focus is on the high-fives and the social

interaction. If you have a large group, you could have the lines shift sideways between reps so kids meet a different friend in the middle of the room each time.

- **Corners:** Divide kids up so that they each have a home corner. Then have them run around the room in a circle, On your cue, they return to their home corner and do a few easy exercises (say, 5 jumping jacks or one 30-second plank). Akpan suggests letting kids decide what exercises to do in each corner to give them ownership over their game.
- **Go Back and Hit It:** On "go," kids run forward in designated lines (see photo). Then call out "Back" so they have to run in reverse. Finally, cue "Hit it!" to incorporate another skill, such as a tuck jump or squat. Again, give kids input on choosing the "hit it" skill.
- **Traffic:** In this BOKS variation of "Red Light, Green Light," there's more going on on the road. Kids stop and start at red and green lights, but they also do a side shuffle for a yellow light, do bunny hops at speed bumps, link elbows and run with a partner for a "carpool," and even gallop when the cue is "deer crossing." Make up some more moves with your kids!

After exercise play with kids, follow up with some stretching to keep muscles strong and healthy. A stretching sequence and cool-down can also help transition kids into a more relaxed state post-workout and help prevent injuries.

Apps:

- 1) **Sworkit Kids** – This app turns exercising into a game with customizable workouts that build strength, agility, and flexibility. The app guides users through exercises that combine interval training with randomized exercises to keep kids from getting bored. The app challenges kids with questions like "how long can you hop on one foot?"
- 2) **I Am Love: Kids' Yoga Journey-** This interactive yoga app is made just for kids. Kids are guided through 13 yoga poses that are demonstrated by children. Yoga can be a great way for kids to reduce stress and decompress before bed.
- 3) **Kids Fitness – Yoga-** This free yoga app features 10 poses and an animated character that guides kids through yoga poses. Each pose is illustrated and explained to make following along easier. Kids can reap the benefits of yoga by using this app.
- 4) **7 Minute Workouts with Lazy Monster-** This is a fitness app for kids the entire family can benefit from. A cute, animated monster leads you through the moves of each type of exercise and there are several seven-minute workouts available. From the basic Lazy Workout, which offers simple moves like running in place and squats; to the Super Hero workout, which lets your young user exercise like a superhero. You can also create a customized workout by compiling your favorite moves. This app is great for all ages, but it's especially enticing for younger kids that are reluctant to exert themselves. The silliness of the monster makes it fun, and it is fast pace to ensure even kids with a short attention span can complete the entire workout before they have a chance to feel bored.

You can also change the degree of difficulty of exercises to make it a lighter or more challenging workout.

- 5) **Fitness Kid** – offers 25 exercises with upbeat music and colorful interactions. Your child can follow along with videos or other kids enjoying their workout. They can also keep track of progress with the training mode or challenge friends.
- 6) **Smash Your Food** - Kids love smashing, don't they? What can be better than giving them a chance to do what they enjoy, smashing the bad and adopting the good. Well, this educational gaming app is all about that. The best part about it is that it teaches the child about nutrition in a playful manner by smashing the foods that contain excess levels of sugar, salt, oil and so on. The more you smash the unhealthy foods, the more points you score. The game does an amazing job at explaining the importance of nutrition to the children. Children gradually understand that foods with high sugar, salt and oil are harmful to their health and they should always smash them.
- 7) **Awesome Eats** This is a very engaging app that will open the green and colorful world of healthy foods in front of your child. This is a healthy eating app that will teach your child about eating veggies and the importance of adding colorful fruits and vegetables to their everyday meals. This app even provides recycling tips at the end, making your child aware of the pollution issues. Some other advantage of this app include children learning about green vegetables and colorful foods. They will also gradually understand that these items should be added to their meals if they wish to stay strong and healthy.
- 8) **This is My Food** – Nutrition for Kids is highly interactive and encourages kids to learn through exploration. Kids will be empowered as they gain knowledge of how to eat a well-balanced meal and why this is important. They'll learn about food, nutrition, and growing herbs in a garden. They can even document herb growth with photographs and audio recordings. As kids explore, they learn interesting facts about fruits, vegetables, growing seasons, and food classification. Each interactive graphic is supported by friendly narration that explains concepts in an age-appropriate manner. This is my Food Nutrition for Kids is a fun way to explore healthy eating habits.