



Tagging Along with your Kids

by Nancy Cook

fsh As a parent, it can be a challenge to free up enough time in the day to complete everything we expect of ourselves.

Divided between work obligations, household chores and parenting responsibilities (isn't diaper detail yours this time, honey?), somewhere in the middle of all that, we must find time to enjoy our families.

We've all heard of the importance of exercise and healthy eating and yet childhood obesity rates are on the rise. Exercise isn't an option but a requirement towards good health.

How will you fit that into your schedule?

By multi-tasking of course.

Family exercise will improve the overall health of your entire family. Children are inspired to play when they get the opportunity to learn by example. Being active parents will inspire your children to be active.

By creating a fun fitness environment, exercise becomes more enjoyable and at the same time develops stronger family connections. Keep the 'work' out of the workout by playing games together.

With a little creativity, you can find a way to make it work for every age group in the family. Children may not want to run a 5K marathon and follow an exercise routine, but odds are they will be willing to play.

"You are an important person in your child's life," said Ellen Hartwick, project coordinator, of a local Good For Life program.

"By being active and showing your child that it is easy and fun, you are helping them to build physical activity into a lifelong habit."

Here are some economical suggestions to enjoy family fitness without taking out a second mortgage on your house.

Remember these guidelines to get the best bang for your fitness time. Provide plenty of water for your thirsty juniors. Always begin your activity with a warm-up, this does not mean stretching. Do not stretch cold muscles, this increases the chance of injury.

A warm up can consist of marching on the spot. Being silly will get your munchkins marching like monsters.

If fitness is a new thing to your family, introduce activity in small doses at first

and slowly increase the length of time and intensity.

In the excitement of it all, it could get a little rough; so remember to watch out for the little toes and bodies attached. The most important guideline is to laugh a ton and have lots of fun.

Let's begin with a simple game of tag. Who doesn't remember how to play tag? The list of variations of the game is endless to a creative mind.

Keeping in the spirit of Halloween...you could try monster tag for the little ones; everyone walks in a scary fashion like Frankenstein.

How about spider tag, hands and feet on the ground, bottoms up or a crab race? With hands and feet just flip over so your tummy is facing the sky and race towards an already marked out finish line.

New moms, as soon as you have your doctor's clearance to begin exercising, you can incorporate your baby into your workouts.

Many workouts are designed just with mom and baby in mind. There are several stroller fitness programs offered throughout York Region, just check with your local recreation centre for details. ■