

[IMAGE]

## 5 Easy Exercises to Get Your Kids Excited About Fitness

By Editorial Staff

Even in today's ultra-competitive, fitness-focused age, health experts generally discourage high-intensity, weight-based training by children and adolescents. One reason is that children are still growing, making them more susceptible to potential injury, particularly joint injuries. No parent wants their child suffering a knee or shoulder injury at age 10 that could affect them for the rest of their life.

All warnings aside, no one's recommending your child sit on the couch all day or exercise purely by "going outside to play." Kids of all ages can try these fun, easy body-weight exercises with you to get a healthy start to core-building, strength-training habits:

*Exercise 1: Push-Ups:* Teach your kids proper form from the get-go: hands slightly wider than shoulder-width and positioned at chest level (higher or lower will stress the shoulders); when pushing up, don't completely lock out the elbows; and of course – you see this all the time with kids – keep the head / back / legs essentially in line (no "butt-in-the-air" push-ups). Goal: See if your child can do one the right way, and then build to at least five.

*Exercise 2: Planks:* Essentially the push-up position, except the arms are bent at the elbow so the forearms rest on the ground, not the hands. Teach your child to keep their "core" tight (stomach) and to look straight down, not ahead (the latter position could strain the neck). Goal: 30 seconds or more.

fitness - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Exercise 3: Squats:* With feet approximately shoulder-width apart and the child holding a towel tight over their shoulders, instruct them to bend their knees as if they're going to sit down on something. The key here is to avoid rounding the back; the movement should focus on the quads (front of the upper legs) and the buttocks. They are not bending over; they are bending their knees and lowering their butt toward the ground in a controlled movement (holding the towel over their shoulders like a barbell will help). Goal: 5 reps at first with correct movement.

*Exercise 4: Lunges:* From a standing position, take one big step forward (e.g., the left leg), bending the knee until the upper leg is parallel with the ground. Simultaneously, the right knee should bend forward, but the right foot should not move. Again, instruct your child to keep their back straight and look straight forward.

Goal: 5 reps on each side.

*Exercise 5: Reverse Crunches*: Position your child flat on an exercise mat, with their back (particularly the lower back) tight against the mat. The movement here is simple: bend the knees and bring them toward the chest. Make sure your child avoids craning their neck or excessively elevating the knees / legs (i.e., up over the head). They should feel their abdominals contract with each lift. The upper back / shoulders should maintain as much contact with the mat as possible. Goal: 10 reps or 10-15 seconds of repetitions.

Once you teach these moves to your child, they can complete the entire routine in only a few minutes – and get a great core / strength workout in the process. Get your kids engaged in their own health with these and other great exercises that put little stress on their developing bodies while teaching them the power of exercise! Talk to your doctor for more information.

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