

[IMAGE]

Getting Kids to Exercise

By Editorial Staff

Remember when you were a kid? Chances are good you played outdoors almost every day, even during the winter months. But times have changed and our children are more likely to exercise their fingers and eyes (read: spending time on smartphones, tablets and computers) than the rest of their bodies. What's the solution? How can we get kids to exercise in the age of technology? Here's how.

It's as simple as reducing the aforementioned screen time that dominates kids' days, according to research. Nearly 100 families were randomly assigned to a two-week "screen media reduction intervention" or instructed to continue their normal patterns of daily screen time. Families in the intervention were instructed to reduce their screen time to seven hours or fewer *per week* (from their usual 2.5 or more hours *per day*).

Average daily change in leisure-time, non-sedentary activity was 44.8 minutes for children in the intervention group compared to only one minute for children in the control group. That's approximately 45 minutes of added physical activity time every day just by limiting kids' screen time.

kid exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark OK, so it works; but how do you make it happen?

After all, per the study, findings from which appear in *JAMA Pediatrics*, average daily screen time among child participants pre-intervention averaged 35.9 hours per week (that's more than five hours per day). The study incorporated one strategy that may work for you: "Three to 5 intervention reminder signs were placed in household locations where family members usually gather or engage with screen devices." We envision signs that remind family members, particularly children, to put down their phones and get some physical activity instead!

With childhood obesity rates soaring (and expected to continue in that direction), finding ways to increase kids' daily physical activity is a responsibility we all need to embrace. The study found that while limiting screen time increased physical activity among children, it didn't do so for adult members of the families.

"The absence of an effect in adults suggests that adults predominantly replaced time usually spend on screen media with other types of nonscreen-based sedentary activities." If you're a parent reading this, here's the takeaway: Want your kids to exercise more (and spend less time staring at screens)? *It starts with you.*

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