Getting Movement in during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is altering the way we function in all aspects of our daily life. Getting your body moving and encouraging your kids to move their bodies can be one way to curb the stress of it all! Regular physical activity is not only associated with better immune function but also improved mental health.

Exercise changes the way our brain functions and can:

- Boost dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin (the "feel-good hormones")
- Reduce inflammation, improve memory and concentration
- Improve mood and increase self-esteem
- Assist in the treatment of mild to moderate depression

Be a Positive Role Model by Moving Your Body!

Lead by example. Children learn habits from watching what their parents do. By role-modeling an active lifestyle, not only will you improve your own well-being, but you will show your kids the importance of their own health. If you don’t know where to start, here are some tips on how to clock more active minutes:

- Make physical activity a lifestyle not a task on the to-do list. Think of ways to sneak in activity by incorporating movement into your daily routine.
- Start small. Jumping into high-intensity or high-volume exercise can lower immune function, not to mention set the stage for failure to maintain such high demands.
- Research shows that moderate levels of exercise are best for most people. (Moderate means you are breathing heavier than normal but are not out of breath, and your body feels warm but is not overly sweaty).
- Set a small goal, achieve it. Repeat. Accomplishing even the smallest fitness goals will help your confidence and increase the likelihood of sticking to your plan.
Engage with Your Kids While Encouraging Physical Activity

The CDC recommends kids ages three to five aim for at least three physically active hours each day, and kids ages six to seventeen aim for at least one hour of moderate to vigorous activity.

☐ Chores count! Encourage the whole family to do chores together – sweep the floor, dust, do yard work.

☐ Just walk. Around the house, the yard, the neighborhood, or find a trail to hike- walking and jogging are the simplest forms of movement. Remember if you go explore together to be mindful of social distancing guidelines.

☐ Put music on and have a dance party! Let your child pick the music.

☐ Ask your kids how they want to move. You might learn something new!

☐ Try creating your own obstacle course – inside or outside – and use a timer to see who completes the course the fastest.

☐ Take turns leading your own exercise class, creating body weight routines that incorporate exercises like squats, lunges, pushups, ab moves, or stair climbs. No equipment necessary!

☐ Look online for free classes to try together. Try yoga, it’s especially great for stress relief.

References:
https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/the-mental-health-benefits-of-exercise.htm
https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/children/index.htm