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EXTENSION

Family Matters

Improving Health Together

June 2022 Newsletter

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Keep Kids Healthy and Happy this Summer

By Tina Haney, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Gunnison County

It's summer and school has barely ended. Your kids are sitting on the couch; one says those two words every parent dreads, "I'm bored". As a parent, we know this happens every summer, so why wait until your children are out of school to find activities? Before school lets out, sit down as a family and brainstorm some ideas you all would like to do through the summer months.



Find out what activities are free or low in cost in your community. Search for youth programs offered by local organizations such as, 4-H, Scouts, Boys and Girls clubs, recreation districts, community centers, local churches, zoos or museums. Also discuss some fun games or activities that your kids can do each day in the backyard or the park, either by themselves or with friends. The point is to create a list of events and activities that your children can enjoy throughout the summer.



If you want to get really organized, make a calendar with the family. Write an activity on each day of the calendar, and then mark them off when it is completed. At summer's end, have the kids review the calendar to see which activities they enjoyed the most.

Set a schedule to keep your children from sleeping until all hours of the morning or sitting in front of the television or playing video games for hours. This is especially helpful for younger children who need structure to the day. For example, have the kids set their alarm and get up by 9:00 am for breakfast and chores. Chores are an excellent way to teach them responsibility as well as getting a little physical activity in. Try to limit TV or video game time to one hour a day. Next, discuss what is on the calendar for the day.

Create some excitement about upcoming activities and events. If you are excited, they will get excited! Don't forget to schedule meals, snacks and breaks. It's important to give active kids break time to rest, hydrate and have a snack since their body needs fuel to replenish and be ready for the next activity.

Fun Summer Ideas:

- play putt-putt or miniature golf (\$)
- do a neighborhood scavenger hunt
- create your own hopscotch course
- prepare a snack together
- plan and cook a family dinner
- go on a picnic
- make an obstacle course
- go bowling (\$)
- visit a museum (\$)
- go hiking and include a nature scavenger hunt

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Let's Talk

Involving kids in the summer planning process is important for success. Let them know that staying active during the summer also means that their body and mind are working hard and growing.

With all this hard work, it will be important that they drink enough water to replace any water their body has lost through sweat and urination. Have water close by at all times and develop a routine to drink it often. Kids can help infuse water with fresh fruit to make it more appealing. Invite kids to help you wash and slice or crush berries, cucumbers, lemons, limes or kiwi and add it to cold water. These are tasty additions to make water more fun to drink. Explain that sugary sodas can make dehydration worse as their body tries to break down the sugar. Many fruits, like watermelon, are high in water content so encourage eating them as part of a meal or snack.



Easy Obstacle Course

Materials

- 3 hula-hoops
- 3-4 pool noodles
- 2 ink pens or sticks per pool noodle
- Water balloons
- 2 buckets
- Timer (optional)



Setup:

Lay three hula-hoops in a row. Make tunnels out of pool noodles. These are so easy to make! Poke a pen into the ground. Slide one end of the pool noodle over it; the pen will go into the hole in the middle of the pool noodle. Do the same thing for the other side and you have a tunnel! Set a bucket of water balloons at the end of the tunnel. Put another bucket about two feet away (or further away as they get better).

Directions:

Kids can start by hopping through the hula-hoops, then crawl through the tunnel, and finally throw water balloons from one bucket to the other bucket. You could time them as they race, or set up two of these courses to have them race against each other. To make it more challenging keep adding obstacles to the course. Find (safe) things in your garage or house to use, or ask your kids for ideas. They will have plenty to contribute! Most of all have fun and make it a friendly competition!