

CHILDREN who lead active lifestyles are more likely to grow up to become physically active adults.

Since many children these days tend to lead sedentary lifestyles, parents should encourage their children to go outdoors and engage in more physical activities.

Outside, children can engage in various sports such as football, badminton, running, basketball, swimming and cycling.

Children can also get active by doing chores and helping out around the house.

Activities such as sweeping the floor, taking out the garbage, washing the dishes, washing the porch, cooking and gardening can help children become more active.

Also, instead of being driven to their extra classes and tuition, children should be encouraged to walk or cycle if it is not too far away.

While it is important to encourage children to be involved in sporting activities and other types of physical activity, parents should also actively reduce inactivity in their children as well.

Physical inactivity should be discouraged as it can lead to obesity and chronic health problems, including cardiovascular disease. Common sedentary activities that compete for time with physical activities include homework, playing games on the computer, tablets, smartphones, watching television and surfing the Internet.

There are plenty of benefits to physical activity. Here are some

Leading an active lifestyle

avoid complications of chronic muscular tension such as headaches or back aches

- Improves sleep
- Improves mental health such as greater confidence
- Improves personal skills, including cooperation and leadership
- Enables making new friends

Getting children to be active

It is recommended that children and young people engage in at least one hour of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity every day.

Children and young people should not spend more than two hours a day on their electronic gadgets especially during the day.

Here are some of the ways that parents can help their children lead more active lifestyles:

- Lead by example – parents who are physically active will encourage their children to follow suit
- Ensure that family outings include opportunities for physical activity
- Encourage children to walk or ride their bicycle for short trips to school or to convenience stores
- Support your child's efforts in

children should be encouraged to do warm-ups. When they are done with their physical activity, they should be encouraged to do cool downs.

Benefits of warm-ups:

- Reduces the risk of injuries
- Increases the body's temperature and heart rate
- Increases the circulation of oxygen-rich blood to the working muscles

Benefits of cool downs:

- Decreases the heart rate to normal levels
- Helps prevent muscle cramps, pains or dizziness after the activity
- Increases the blood and oxygen flow to the whole body

Here are some examples of warm-ups and cool downs that children can do:

- Jogging
- Stationary marching
- Arm movements
- Star jumps

Each activity should be done for at least 30 seconds for optimum effect. Warm-ups and cool downs also include stretching.

You should hold each stretch for at least 20 seconds for it to be effective. Here are some basic stretches to do before and after



Stretching exercises are good for both warm-ups and cool downs.

examples:

- Helps achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Maintains and develops flexibility
- Improves overall fitness
- Improves posture
- Increases cardiovascular fitness
- Promotes healthy growth of bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons
- Improves balance and coordination
- Develops greater ability to physically relax and therefore,

sporting activities and attend their competitions or matches so that they are motivated to do more

- Set time limits on sedentary activities such as playing computer games, surfing the Internet and watching television
- Work with your child's school to encourage more participation in sports and physical activities

Warming up and cooling down

Before engaging in any strenuous physical activity,

exercising:

Back and neck stretch

- Bend your head forward until your chin touches your chest.
- Next, place your hands on your hips and move your head to look at the ceiling.

Chest, spine and abdomen stretch

- Sit on a chair with both feet flat on the floor.
- Without moving your hip, turn slowly to the left with both hands gripping the left side of

the chair.

- Repeat on the right.

Calf and hamstring stretch

- Sit on the floor, stretch out your right leg and fold your left leg inwards.
- Stretch out your arms and try to touch your right foot.
- Repeat with your left leg.

Thigh stretch

- Stand on your right leg. Hold on to a chair or a wall to balance yourself.

- Hold on to your left ankle and bend your left knee to the back.

- Ensure that you are standing straight. Keep both knees and thighs together.

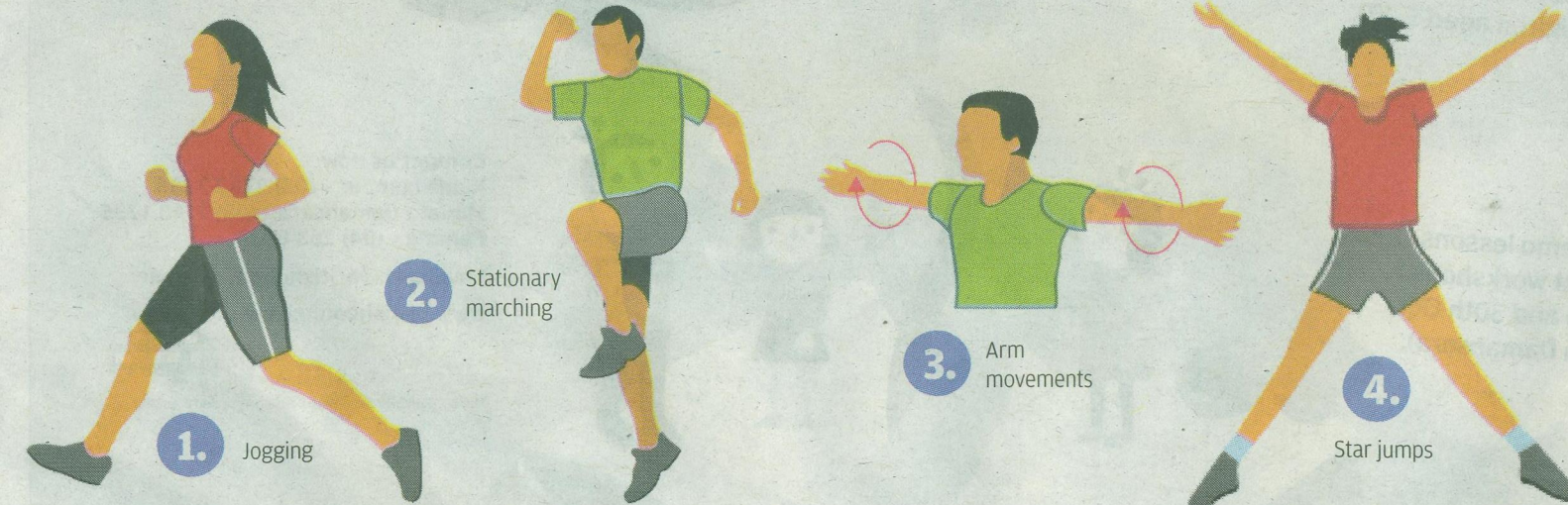
- Repeat with your left leg.

About the Nestlé Healthy Kids Programme

THE Nestlé Healthy Kids Programme is aimed at improving nutrition knowledge and promoting active lifestyles among school students aged between seven and 17. It consists of two modules – a Primary School Module called the Nestlé Healthy Kids Programme and the Secondary School Module called *Program Cara Hidup Sihat*.

Both programmes are based on a multi-partnership approach, collaborating with national health and educational authorities such as Ministry of Education, Nutrition Society of Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

To learn more about the programme, visit www.healthykids.org.my



These are some examples of warm up and cool down activities.