



FOOD & FUN AFTERSCHOOL, SECOND EDITION PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

UNIT 9: PLAY HARD

ABOUT PARENT ENGAGEMENT

At the Y, we understand that making a difference in children’s health means involving families. Engaging with families in afterschool time is associated with increased family involvement in children’s education and school, improved relationships between parents and children, and improved implementation and outcomes for afterschool programs*.

This tool contains parent engagement activities, a newsletter article, and an email message for you to use with Food & Fun unit 9. These tools are intended to help you connect with and educate parents and caregivers on the key messages in Food & Fun. (You can find all the Food & Fun resources on [Exchange](#).)

It is important to engage parents and caregivers on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that programs have engaged families at afterschool:

- Have a conversation with parents and caregivers at pickup
- Create a bulletin board with the key messages from each Food & Fun unit
- Involve parents and caregivers in daily physical activities and snack time
- Hold regularly scheduled events each month, like a family night

**Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School. A joint publication of United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Harvard Family Research Project, and Build the Out-Of-School Time Network.*

PARENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Experiment and be creative—come up with your own ideas or modify the activities below to engage parents and caregivers at your afterschool program!

- **Train for a 5k run!** Find a 5k fun run in your area and start training! Schedule a weekly run with families, and encourage running on other days of the week as well. Make it an annual event for families to participate in!

- **Family field trip.** Take a field trip to your local YMCA to use the gym equipment, swim in the pool, or participate in a class the Y might be offering for families to do together!

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Use this article in your organization's publications. Be sure to include the credit "Provided by Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity and YMCA of the USA."

GET MOVING! FEEL GREAT!

Feeling exhausted at the end of the day? How about the kids....do they just want to watch TV? Physical activity helps you feel better right away, no matter what kind you choose.

This month our program will focus on the importance of being physically active every day. Our goal is to engage children in regular physical activity in a way that encourages all children, regardless of their abilities.

The key messages for adults are:

- Kids should get vigorous activity (that make them breathe hard or sweat) at least three times a week.
- Vigorous activities build strength and endurance and are good for the heart and bones.
- Be a good role model and make time for vigorous physical activity.

The key messages we'll be teaching kids are:

- Doing activities that make you sweat or breathe hard will make you strong and keep your bones and heart healthy.
- Playing hard is fun when it's something you like to do.
- Do an activity that makes you sweat or breathe hard at least three times per week.

Daily physical activity can give you more energy and improve your sleep and focus. Staying active over time also helps you keep a healthy weight. It protects you from heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and osteoporosis (weak bones).

How much activity do kids need? Kids should get 1 hour or more of physical activity every day. This can be spread out in periods of 10–15 minutes. Kids should do vigorous activity on at least three days per week. This includes activities that make kids breathe hard and sweat.

EXAMPLES OF MODERATE ACTIVITY

EXAMPLES OF VIGOROUS ACTIVITY

Games and sports that are similar to fast walking:

Games and sports which are more intense than fast walking. They make you sweat:

hopscotch

kickball

swimming

basketball

playground play

4-square

jumping rope

running

bike riding

Frisbee

soccer

aerobic dancing

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR FAMILY ACTIVE

- Play a game of tag or soccer after school.
- Instead of watching TV, take a walk or dance around the house after dinner.
- Plan at least one fun physical activity together on weekends.
- Involve kids in active chores, like putting away groceries or sweeping.
- Take the stairs when you're at your favorite museum or library.
- Make sure that your children have opportunities for active play after school on most days of the week. This can be in your yard, at a playground, or in sports and recreation programs.

Children who grow up in an active family are more likely to remain active as adults. An active lifestyle can help your family live longer, healthier lives. Set a good example by being active yourself! Encourage your children to find activities they enjoy. For more ideas on fun ways to get your family active, check out www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/marketing/adult/index.htm. For more on keeping your family healthy, visit www.ymca.net/healthy-family-home.

EMAIL MESSAGE

Use this sample message to communicate with parents and caregivers by email.

SUBJECT: **Healthy Habits Power Tips: Get Moving!**

Dear (*your program*) Parents and Caregivers:

This month (*your program*) will focus on the importance of being physically active every day.

The key messages for adults are:

- Kids should get vigorous activity (that make them breathe hard or sweat) at least three times a week.
- Vigorous activities build strength and endurance and are good for the heart and bones.
- Be a good role model and make time for vigorous physical activity.

The key messages for kids are:

- Doing activities that make you sweat or breathe hard will make you strong and keep your bones and heart healthy.
- Playing hard is fun when it's something you like to do.
- Do an activity that makes you sweat or breathe hard at least three times per week.

Our goal is to engage children in regular physical activity in a way that encourages all children, regardless of their abilities.

You can encourage regular physical activity at home by reinforcing the key messages, and by following these **Healthy Habits Power Tips**:

- Be a good role model by doing regular physical activity yourself.
- Play a game of tag or soccer after school.
- Instead of watching TV, take a walk or dance around the house after dinner.
- Plan at least one fun physical activity together on weekends.
- Involve kids in active chores, like putting away groceries or sweeping.
- Take the stairs when you're at your favorite museum or library.
- Make sure that your children have opportunities for active play after school on most days of the week. This can be in your yard, at a playground, or in sports and recreation programs.

Want to learn more? Visit www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/marketing/adult/index.htm for ideas for games and activities to play. For more on keeping your family healthy, visit www.ymca.net/healthy-family-home.