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Find the fun in fitness

Stanton- If you've been thinking about prying your family off the couch and adopting a more active lifestyle, there's no time like the present! Sure, it may seem like a daunting task, but making the commitment to get moving is the hardest part. The follow-through can actually be fun!

Here are some tips to help get you started:

Be a good example. If you want to change your child's behavior, you must first change your own. Start out small, make realistic goals and keep your eye on the prize. While your family may not jump at the chance to join you in your new quest for fitness, don't despair. They're watching, so set the example you want them to follow.

Make it easy. Create routines and an environment that makes healthy choices easier for everyone. For example, put fresh fruit in a bowl on the dining room table or kitchen counter, or involve the kids with cooking or shopping.

Find the fun in fitness. Choose activities the whole family can enjoy together, such as walking, bike riding, or tennis.

Integrate small, positive changes into routine family activities. If the family's going to sit down for a movie, make it a routine that everyone goes for a walk first. If you're going out to the movies, see how far away you can park in the lot and walk to the theater. If it's pizza night, have everyone shoot some hoops together beforehand.

Be willing to sacrifice. Your family will need to let go of some well-loved but unhealthy habits to make room for the new healthier ones. For example, you may miss your nightly ice cream, but after a while you will grow to love your perfect piece of fruit. You may also find it hard to say good-bye to a favorite TV show, but you and your kids will have just as much fun, if not more, spending an hour making a healthy dinner or taking a walk around the neighborhood.

Be creative. Even after you've found what works for your family, things can get boring, so don't be afraid to mix it up. Be flexible and open to new ideas -- and involve the whole family.

The key to this whole process is finding activities every member of your family can enjoy, and then making a commitment to incorporate those fun activities into your daily routine.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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