

**Special
Reprint
Edition**



As seen in



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Motivated families can make fitness a goal for all

Take the eight-week challenge together, find fun along the way

By Nanci Hellmich
USA TODAY

The family that plays together stays fit together. But too often only the sofa in the family's TV room gets much of a workout.

Why don't more families do physical activities together?

USA TODAY readers say they'd like to do more, but somehow they just never seem to have the time, the energy or the drive.

"Our biggest challenge is laziness and procrastination, so in a nutshell, we lack motivation," says Kellie Tayer, 49, of Shaker Heights, Ohio. "We joined a gym last fall, and we almost never go. Talk about a waste of money."

Taylor Kidd, 19, of Mechanicsburg, Pa., says most of her family's activities "involve sitting and eating rather than going outside and moving around. We all want it to be normal for us to go for a walk after dinner rather than plop down in front of the TV for another three hours."

And Whitney Glaser, 42, of Sarasota, Fla., says her family isn't as active as they'd like to be because they are too tired at the end of the day. "I have always admired those people who seem naturally active. When they have a choice, they go out for a hike instead of watching a movie. We are not like that, but we want to be."

Only a third of Americans now meet the government's minimum guidelines for physical activity, which are at least 2 1/2 hours a week of moderate-intensity activity (such as brisk walking) for adults and one hour a day for children and teens.

So to help families get in better shape this summer and have fun doing it, USA TODAY is launching its first Family Fitness Challenge.

We're challenging families to try some



**Family Fitness
Challenge**

Week 1: Take an active staycation day.

Work with your family to plan a one-day active staycation — a low-cost vacation day near home. Make it a day of physical activities: Go on a hike at a nearby park or through a city you've wanted to explore. Visit the local rec center to play miniature golf, take a yoga class, swim, play tennis, run, lift weights.

Or consider a day at a beach playing Frisbee, flying a kite, jogging or taking walks, and building sand castles.

Week 2: Stage a sports competition.

Split the family into two teams and host a day of friendly competition in several games and sports — table tennis, relay races, basketball, swimming.

Give points for the winners and have the losing team cook a healthful dinner for the winners.

Week 3: Go retro active.

Spend an hour every night for one week doing an old-fashioned physical activity together that someone in the family has never done before. Think retro.

Consider hula hooping, playing games such as hopscotch, Simon Says, hide-and-seek, four square. Organize some old-style races — hopping, skipping, potato-sack races. Or go roller skating.

Week 4: Give dance a chance.

Figure out a dance the entire family can learn and practice it all week. It might be the waltz, line dancing, foxtrot or salsa.

If no one knows how to dance, rent an instructional DVD that will give you some guidance.

Have fun and put on a show at the end. Young children may be the stars. Have them dress up in costumes.

Make a video of the family practicing and of the final show. The challenge is to learn a dance and get a good workout in the process.

new activities together so everyone in the family will be healthier.

The ideas — which were developed by top national health and fitness experts especially for USA TODAY readers — are meant to be fun as well as active.

You can repeat the ones you really like or give them all a try.

Every week for the next two months, we'll feature stories about how USA TODAY readers and their families put the challenge ideas into action.

Week 5: Set the stage for fun and games.

Put together an activity area and then spend an hour or longer each day for a week there with your kids.

Gather some simple, inexpensive toys and sports equipment that the family can use to play outdoors. Younger kids like balls of all sizes. Older children enjoy sporting games — basketball, baseball, badminton, Frisbee and tag. For rainy days, create an indoor play area. Designate an area in the basement, garage or a spare bedroom for softballs, hula hoops and jump ropes, maybe a small indoor trampoline surrounded by fluffy pillows.

And kids still love the game of Twister.

Week 6: Go on an active scavenger hunt.

Plan a one- to two-hour scavenger hunt. Be as creative as possible. You can explore a nearby park, your home, the woods, the mall — even the grocery store.

At the supermarket, each family member might pick a different color fruit or veggie, find a yogurt that's low in sugar (10 to 15 grams), find a bread that lists 100% whole wheat as a main ingredient.

Wear a pedometer and keep track of your steps.

Week 7: Indulge your inner child with a play date.

Go to a nearby park or playground and become a kid again: Climb on the monkey bars, slide down the slide, see how high and long you can glide on the swings. The entire family has to give it a go.

Week 8: Go camping.

This can be an overnight trip or a day trip in your backyard or on your deck or even inside the house.

If you have young children, you can have them make tents out of blankets and card tables in your living room. If you have older children, you might plan a trip to a nearby state park.

Your family can take the ideas and create your own adventures, then share your experience with others at dietchallenge.usatoday.com.

Nintendo is sponsoring this year's challenge. USA TODAY gave eight families a Wii console, software and accessories. The families will be using *Wii Sports Resort* and *Wii Fit Plus* to help them shape up this summer and will be sharing their experiences with readers.

Quick tips for health, fitness

Want to make big strides in shaping up this summer? Here are some ideas that may help you and your family get started:

Set some goals.

Try to meet the government's physical activity guidelines:

- ▶ Kids and teens should do an hour or more of moderate-intensity to vigorous physical activity each day.

That includes running, biking, swimming, walking, jumping rope, skipping, playing basketball or soccer and doing muscle-strengthening activities such as tug of war, modified sit-ups and push-ups.

- ▶ Adults should do at least 2½ hours of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, such as brisk walking, or 1¼ hours of a vigorous-intensity activity, such as jogging or swimming laps, or a combination of the two types.

These aerobic activities should be done in at least 10-minute bouts. This is the minimum amount. More is better.

- ▶ Adults also should do muscle-strengthening (resistance) activities at a moderate- or high-intensity level for all major muscle groups two or more days a week. This should include exercises for the chest, back, shoulders, upper legs, hips, abdomen and lower legs.

- ▶ Older folks should follow the guidelines for other adults if they are able. If not, they should be as active as their physical condition allows.

Count your steps.

Buy pedometers for everyone in your family to keep track of how much you walk. Aim for at least 10,000 steps (about 5 miles depending on stride length) a day. More is better.

Walk wherever, whenever you can. Track how many steps you take in the grocery store. See how many steps it is around your block or from your parked car into work. Find a local farmers market and walk around there.

You can even set up a friendly family competition and give an award each week to the person who takes the most steps. The prize might be a jump rope, hula hoop or exercise DVD.

Find food to fuel fitness.

Spring-clean your cupboards, pantry and refrigerator. Throw out cookies, candy, chips, ice cream, regular soda and any other sweetened beverages.

Now plan several new healthful breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Make some of these new meals together and then have everyone in the family rate the meals, using our rating system on a scale of zero (yuck, never make this again) to 5 (yummy, we could have this regularly).

You can find simple and easy recipes on our website at dietchallenge.usatoday.com.