



## Looking to Get Your Children More Active?

It's been a great summer, awesome weather means plenty of opportunities for kids to get outside and get active, which means they eat better, sleep better and burn up any excess energy, as well as a chance for families to get moving together.

However, despite the opportunities, there is plenty of evidence that kids aren't moving as much as they used to and as a result, as a nation, we are facing a generation of less active and less healthy kids.

The Ministry of Health reports that in New Zealand, 31% of children aged 2-14 years are overweight, and this trend has been on the rise in recent years. Internationally the World Health Organisation reports that 42 million under the age of 5 are overweight (2103 figures).

Getting kids active helps them with their physical development, helping to build strong bones, muscles and joints, and a healthy heart and lungs. It will also improve their balance, co-ordination and cognitive skills, and it will help them be more confident and socially interactive.

And the benefits aren't just physical. Researchers from the University of Granada (UGR) have proven that physical fitness in children may affect their brain structure, which in turn may have an influence on their academic performance. The researchers have confirmed that physical fitness in children (especially aerobic capacity and motor ability) is associated with a greater volume of grey matter in several cortical and subcortical brain regions.

While physical activity and childhood goes together, more and more there is competition for getting active. Nearly half of children aged 5–14 years (53 percent) usually watch two or more hours of television a day, and this time increases into the teen years. This means we cannot just assume kids will stay active. Just as we plan time to exercise and engage in physical activity, we need to make sure this happens for our kids too.

Whangarei based personal trainer, and NZ Exercise Industry Awards Personal Trainer of the Year Corinne Austin is a believer in using fun to get kids active. And of the non-physical benefits she says, *“allow it to be an opening to make memories; an occasion that presents a myriad of opportunities to move and in the process, you'll not only be teaching your children about being courageous, and enthusiastic, but you'll be growing closer together as well.”*

Corinne has some easy suggestions to get your kids active:

- **Go Outdoorsy** - By going outdoors we instantly reduce the number of distractions that niggle at us at home. We are spoilt for choice in NZ. Make a plan to go outdoorsy on a regular basis.
- **Evening Strolls!** - It sounds all too easy, because it is! Embarking on a post-dinner leisurely stroll with the family is such an easy way to unwind after our hectic days, and to reconnect as a family. Even ten minutes will do wonders for your collective soul and help you prepare for a restful sleep.
- **Fits and Giggles!** Remove the 'grown up' hat and throw on the 'have some fun' hat for a wee while. For our health it's crucial to have fun. Laughter is the best medicine after all! And what better way to do it than with our children

Older kids - Once kids head into their teenage years and beyond, there's no reason they can't enjoy exercise in the way we do. While sporty orientated kids will continue getting active that way, for those who prefer to work at their own pace, many exercise facilities and exercise professionals offer student rates which mean you can set your teenager up with safe and effective exercise in a way that they will enjoy.

References:

Story Source: Materials provided by [University of Granada](#).

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## Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals**, Registrar Stephen Gacsal

Email: [stephen@reps.org.nz](mailto:stephen@reps.org.nz) telephone: 0800 55 44 99 website: [www.reps.org.nz](http://www.reps.org.nz)

**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)** - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - [www.icreps.org](http://www.icreps.org)

**Exercise Association of New Zealand**, Chief Executive Richard Beddie

Email: [richard@exercisenz.org.nz](mailto:richard@exercisenz.org.nz), telephone: 0800 66 88 11 website: <http://www.exercisenz.org.nz>

**Exercise Association of New Zealand** - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

