

Protecting Our Children

Prevent Obesity—Get Their Motors Running

(NAPSA)—Today, one out of every six children is overweight—nearly double the number of 20 years ago.

Because research has shown that those who are physically inactive as children tend to remain so as adults, many of these kids will grow up to become prime candidates for heart disease, hypertension and diabetes.

Recently, the National Association for Sports and Physical Education, a non-profit association representing 40,000 sports and physical educators, issued a set of national activity guidelines for young children. They recommend that even toddlers and preschoolers participate in 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity each day.

What can parents do to help? There are several activities parents can use to get kids moving:

- **Running:** Important for almost every sport, this fundamental motor skill is still a child favorite. Help them learn about pace by asking them to run to a tempo as you clap your hands.

- **Catching:** Playing a simple game of catch can enhance hand-eye coordination skills and build lasting bonds. Children, 2 to 3, will try to catch with their arms wide open, so use oversized balls.

- **Kicking:** Learning to manipulate a ball with the foot develops balance, leg strength and is a critical skill in that most popular of



Fun and fitness-promoting activities can help your child live a healthier life.

children's sports, soccer. For children 2 to 3, line up a row of different-sized balls. Have them kick each as hard as they can. For children 4 to 6, roll a variety of balls toward your child and have them try to kick each one in succession.

- **Striking:** Many sports involve the ability to hit a moving object. For kids 2 to 3, place a large, soft ball on a tee and have your child swing away with a plastic bat. For children 4 to 6, toss the soft ball to your child and have him or her try to strike it with the bat.

Parents can learn more through a brochure, *Active Kids*, created by Fisher-Price. The brochure offers fitness advice and tips to help kids "Grow to Pro" from the publishers of *Healthy Kids*. For a free copy, call 1-800-432-5437.