

Keeping Kids Active: It's All About Imagination!

By Liz Fleming

Oh the weather outside is frightful...and you can't seem to pry the kids away from the television and the computer!

It's a familiar story, and a common problem for the parents of today's plugged-in generation.

Health conscious parents know that the recommended amount of daily physical activity for a child over two years is 90 minutes. Of that 90 minutes, 60 should be moderate such as bicycling, swimming, brisk walking or dancing – activities that get the heart rate slightly above normal. The other 30 minutes of that 90 minute daily total should be vigorous activity that will get your child's heart pumping to build a strong cardio-vascular system.

That sounds like a tall order on a rainy day!

Not so, says Dr. Stafford Dobbin, the local family physician who has been head of Heart Niagara since 1978 “Children have a natural love of activity.

It's just a matter of providing them with the opportunity to get moving.”

So how can you unplug your children and get them up and active, no matter what the weather's doing?

Consider these rainy day/snowy day suggestions:

- **Duck Duck Goose**
Sometimes the oldest games are the best!
Have the kids sit in a circle and choose one to be the goose. He or she then walks around outside the circle, touching every child on the head and saying “Duck, duck, duck., duck...” When the Goose finally says “Goose”, the child whose head was touched last gets up and the two race in opposite directions around the circle to get back to the empty place first. Lots of giggling is guaranteed.
- **Life's A Circus!**
Have your little performers take to the centre ring to pretend to be the lion and the lion tamer, the tumbling act or the strong man. Don't forget to have a parade of the performers through the house!
- **Go Carpet Skating:** Put a piece of shiny paper under each foot and ‘skate’ across the carpet. Try taking big strides and then smaller one and see

which way makes you feel most like Elvis Stoyko.

- **Make Your Own Gym**
Set up an exercise circuit in your house and time your children as they make their way through the activities. Hop around the living room twice. Do three front rolls down and three front rolls up the length of the dining room. Crab walk across the kitchen floor. Use your imagination and have fun! Can you do the circuit faster next time?
- **Kitchen Floor Toboggans**
Have the kids sit close together as if they were on a toboggan with their legs wrapped around each other. Have them push with their hands so they slide along the floor together. When they hit the wall, have them jump up, run back to the finish line and do it all over again.
- **Have a Ball**
Scrunch up newspaper balls, divide the kids into two teams and use kitchen chairs to set up goals. Set the timer on the stove for one minute. When the game starts, each team has to try to throw as many paper balls as possible into their opponent's goal. When the buzzer sounds, count the balls and start again.
- **Get Into the Action**
Read a story while the kids act it out. Choose something exciting, with lots of opportunities for budding stars to really get into their roles!
- **Run The Obstacle Course**
Climb over chairs and under tables. Shimmy through a blanket tunnel and slither up the stairs on your belly. With just the usual household furniture and a bit of creativity, you and your kids can make a fabulous obstacle course!

Housebound Hopscotch

A bit of masking tape on the kitchen floor and a beanbag to toss and you'll have the perfect hopscotch setup to keep kids busy for hours.