



Holiday Fitness for Families: Help your family stay in shape this season with these holiday fitness tips. By Catherine Holecko, About.com Guide

For most families, life turns even topsy-turvier than usual during November and December. We squeeze extra entertaining, baking, shopping, errands, concerts, and parties into our already busy schedules, and that means holiday fitness takes a back seat. Combine that with all the tempting treats: Ho-ho-uh oh! It's essential to find ways to fit in some family holiday fitness, and we promise there are ways to do it that won't turn you into a Grinch.

Shop 'til You Drop?

Turn a leisurely cruise around the mall into a power-walk and you reap the same fitness benefits you would out on a hiking trail. Hit stores at off hours to avoid crowds (or else treat that zigging and zagging you're doing as extra aerobic output). And don't forget to take the stairs and park in the far end of the lot. Those extra steps add up too. How about walking a lap around the parking lot before you go home? Extra points if you're carrying heavy bags!

Or, take the opposite tack. Streamline shopping and devote the time (and money!) you save to fitness.

- Cut back on your gift list.
- Team up with a friend—make a shopping list, group like items together, and split up the stops. You hit the toy store while she buys books, and so on.
- Shop online, especially for faraway relatives and friends; that way you avoid trips to the post office too.

Create Family Holiday Fitness Traditions

Treasured rituals are an important part of the holiday season for most families. Add or adapt yours to include fitness! Consider:

- An all-ages Christmas caroling party, complete with active holiday party games
- Walking, instead of driving, to view holiday lights and decorations
- A kids' talent show during family get-togethers
- Cutting your own Christmas tree
- A family skiing, snowboarding, sledding, or snowshoeing outing during school vacation
- Feeling ambitious? Build a backyard ice rink!

Fit in Holiday Fitness, Cut Out Fat

An unpredictable, extra-busy schedule can easily derail your usual exercise routines. Try working out early in the morning, before you're interrupted for the day. Have a backup plan, so that in case you miss your usual Spinning class (or your child has to skip his karate lesson), you take a bike ride or do an exercise video instead. If you have houseguests, invite them to join you on your daily run or trip to the gym. And don't miss this excellent advice from About.com Guides:

- From Exercise: Quick Tips – How to Stay Active and Exercise During the Holidays
- From Walking: 10 Tips for Finding Time to Walk
- From Weight Training: How Not to Get as Fat as Santa Over Christmas
- From Weight Loss: 5 Ways to Avoid Holiday Weight Gain
- From Low-Fat Cooking: Top 7 Lowfat Christmas Cookies
- From Walking: Thanksgiving Calorie Calculator and Christmas Calorie Calculator

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