

Healthy ways

Long sun-soaked days offer ample time to get fit and have fun with the family

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Kids underfoot moaning about how bored they are?

In a country where sunshine reigns for a solid 12 hours on a typical summer's day, there's no better time to get the whole family outdoors to get active and have fun, Sydney personal trainer, author and nutrition expert Ricardo Riskalla says.

"You might be on holidays but it's important to remember that health doesn't go on holidays. In fact, longer days present a great opportunity to pay attention to other factors that we neglect on a daily basis such as sleeping at least eight hours a day, walking at least one hour a day and taking time to learn a new activity," Ricardo says.

"My best advice? Every day plan new activities at least two hours after lunch, so you can avoid the harsh sun and still have from 2pm until dusk to get moving and reconnect as a family."

Looking for more new ideas this summer? Consider adding some of these activities to your holiday repertoire.

DEVELOP A GREEN THUMB

The health benefits of spending time in the back yard are nothing new (studies show connecting with nature is good for a child's mental health and a great way to load up on vitamin D), and Ricardo is a fan.

"Gardening is a great workout for all ages, since you are constantly squatting, walking around and using your arms," he says.

"From planting trees to starting vegetable patches, you can find a project to suit everyone."

HIT UP THE LOCAL PARK

Kids often need no encouragement to head to the local park, but you will have to think beyond the usual "push them on the swings" setting by arming yourself with a bike, frisbee, scooter and some fresh ideas.

"Get involved, remember that every tree branch can become a chin-up bar or the space between two trees can be a soccer goal, and incorporate activities that

make them puff and build strength," Ricardo says.

JUST ADD WATER

It's a time of year when water babies blossom, but if your child is still splashing around, it could be they haven't found the activity that suits them best.

Consider signing them up to Nippers at your local beach or try stand-up paddle boarding or kayaking as a family. But remember to keep a close eye on them near water, Ricardo says.

"Water sports are a great way to burn that extra energy, but not advised as a fully relaxing activity if that's what you were hoping for."

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

If your child isn't into traditional sport and fitness options or they've grown bored of the usual offerings, jump online to see whether there is a sports camp nearby that accommodates both adults and children.

Another idea is to seek a fun

activity, which seems more like an entertainment option than anything else, Ricardo recommends.

Options include indoor rock climbing, canyoning and, for those in need of a break from the summer sun, ice-skating.

TAKE A HIKE


Kids are notorious for asking "how much further" whenever an outing involves a little bit of legwork.

Yet when it comes to heading to the great outdoors — be it a coastal walk or going bush — they seem to come into their own.

Planning small hikes is a great way for the whole family to get fit, Ricardo says.

"Walking is the most affordable, complete exercise," he says.

"It is great to reduce the stress hormone cortisol, and depending on where you go and where you stop, you can easily make it a fun day out."

Go online to see what hikes are available in your local area — there's a chance you will be pleasantly surprised at the choices. 

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