

By Melissa Taylor

## Fun Winter Fitness: *Cool Ways To Keep Kids Active During Cold Winter Months*

What do your kids do every day? Eat. Sleep. Brush teeth... get 60 minutes of physical activity?

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends school age children engage in “at least sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.” Even more time for toddlers and preschoolers – every day!

If you’re wondering how to get in daily exercise, Youth Fitness Specialist, Billy Corbett of RetroFIT, Denver says, “If you have to motivate a kid to move, then chances are he’s not going to stay with the plan. Kids need to be inspired. Inspiration comes from you, the parent. If you think your kid is going to get moving by themselves you’re in for a surprise. There needs to be a consistent regimen every day.”

Kids need fun ideas for daily physical movement, ideas to keep them active and healthy, especially during the colder winter months. Outdoor play in Colorado benefits children with valuable Vitamin D from the sun – an essential immunity booster, bone builder, and memory builder. What’s more, research shows that active play develops thinking and social skills in addition to the physical health benefits.

Angela Dee Ewari, certified running coach says, “In our kids running club, we emphasize fun and educate on the importance of being healthy for life. But, the kids’ biggest motivation is the social aspect. You tell a kid to go out and run a mile and they whimper and whine, but when you throw other kids in the mix, they push themselves harder than any coach or parent can, and they’re having fun.”

Don’t worry. It’s easier than you think. Think about what you did for fun in your own childhood. Our back to basics guide below includes the best activities of childhood like tag and sledding. Use this list as a resource to keep your kids fit and healthy throughout the winter months.

### OUTSIDE

#### ● SLEDDING

Wait for the next snow day, grab your sled and your child and head for a hill. Every step up that hill might be agony but the reward sure is worth it when you’re breaking speed records going down.



#### ● SNOWSHOEING

Coach Stacy Fowler, M.S., C.P.T., President of the Colorado Governor’s Council for Physical Fitness says, “If you can walk, you can snowshoe. It’s safe and low impact.” Try renting snowshoe equipment first. Give it a try. If the kids enjoy it, the cost of purchasing equipment is reasonable.

#### ● SNOWBALL FIGHT

Snowball fighting involves a lot of movement – bending, twisting, and running. Just good old-fashioned fun.

#### ● TAG

Kids get cardiovascular exercise while running around with friends.

### INSIDE

#### ● BASKETBALL

Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Denver Nuggets, Steve Hess, set up two small basketball hoops on either end of his basement so his boys can play inside in bad weather.

#### ● MINI-TRAMPOLINE

Buy these at any sporting store, and let your kids bounce, dance, and run in place.

## Autumn-only Activities for Fall Fun

*Fall offers a bounty of fun ways to celebrate nature and build great family memories! Check out these autumn-only activities:*

**1) Animal watch** – Take a family nature walk! Using a notebook and pencil, record what the animals you see are doing to prepare for the cold winter months (e.g., birds: flying south in “V” formation). Back at home, do further research online and compare the animals’ winter behavior to human behavior. For example, to keep warm, some animals grow thicker fur while humans wear warm layers of clothes.

**2) Bake your own** – Making homemade treats like pumpkin pie will make your home feel full of fall festivity. Before baking, you can even visit your local farm for apple or pumpkin picking, hayrides, a lesson in farming and a fresh treat like cider.

**3) Build-a-crow** – Building your own scarecrow is easier than you think! Just gather old jeans, a tattered long-sleeved shirt, socks, gloves, a straw hat, a pillowcase for the head, string or rope, and your choice of stuffing (crumpled newspaper works well). Take the family outside and get started:

- Tie the ends of the pants and stuff the pants.
- Tie the ends of the sleeves and stuff the shirt.
- Stuff the socks and tie them to the ends of the pants; stuff the gloves and tie them to the shirt sleeves. Tuck the shirt into the pants.
- Using a marker, draw a face on the pillowcase. Stuff the pillowcase and fasten it to the body with safety pins.
- Top with straw hat.
- Sit your scarecrow against a tree in the yard or against the house.

**4) Family tree** – Look outside for leaves that remind you of family members. (e.g., a red leaf might remind you of Grandma because she always wears her favorite red sweater for the holidays). Gather enough leaves to represent your whole family. Leaves need to be dry and flat before making your tree. Put them between two sheets of newspaper and cover with heavy books overnight. The next day, place the leaves between two sheets of wax paper and press with a medium-hot iron. (This is a grown-up job, so keep little kids away.) After they’ve cooled, cut out the leaves. Draw a tree on a piece of cardboard. Glue the leaves to the branches and write each family member’s name near his or her leaf.

From the editors of Your Family Today.



### ● DANCE MAT

From Dance Dance Revolution to High School Musical, dance mats instruct kids’ to imitate preprogrammed moves on their mats. Check product reviews to find the best one for your family.

### ● NINTENDO Wii ACTIVE GAMES

“Last Christmas, we got Wii Fit and love it!” shares Lisa Vratny-Smith, Aurora-based Behavioral Specialist and yoga instructor. “It is a really fun way to get some exercise without even noticing. My kids love the runs, soccer heading, and all the balance games. It helps with body awareness, strength, stamina, and balance.”

### ● HULLABALOO

Hullabaloo by Cranium is Colorado National Physique Committee Chairman Jeff Taylor’s favorite kid game. Taylor elaborates, “It’s easy to set up anywhere, kids always love it and it keeps kids moving. Kids jump, spin, and dance between colored shape pads.”

### ● HYPER DASH

In Hyper Dash by Wild Planet players race against the clock between five different colored and numbered plastic targets. It’s a fast-paced game of speed, skill, memory, and coordination.

### ● JUMP ROPE

If your ceiling is high enough, jump rope inside. Check YouTube for inspiring jump rope tricks and songs.

### ● YOGA

Gaiam, a Colorado company, makes yoga DVDs for children. Kids’ yoga movements are familiar animals like a snake, lion, cat, or butterfly.

“Start by setting a great example for your kids,” says Nancy Broady Lataitis, MD, FAAP of Partners In Pediatrics. “Make healthy food choices for yourself and make exercise and regular sleep habits a priority for the entire family. Use activities as “rewards” and to celebrate, rather than using food and sweets. After all, your kids really value a great time with you.” ♦

## Resources

- [www.winterfeelsgood.com](http://www.winterfeelsgood.com)
- [www.billycorbettstretrofit.com](http://www.billycorbettstretrofit.com)
- International Youth and Conditioning Association [www.iyca.org](http://www.iyca.org)
- *The Youth Obesity Solution* Brian Grasso
- *The Dangerous Book for Boys* by Conn and Hall Iggulden