

# Fitness for Families

**Format:** This is a **Learner-Centered Education (LCE)** lesson plan. It honors the learner as the decision-maker; ensures that the learner has a voice before, during, and after the session; incorporates RISE principles (Respect, Immediate Meaningfulness, Safety, and Engagement); and minimizes content to allow participants to see, discuss, and practice using the most important information and skills. It also includes designer notes and reviewer comments.

## Who

WIC participants, children, friends and family. Includes pregnant women, mothers, some fathers, foster parents, other caregivers. They are here for a secondary nutrition education appointment (GA). Range of cultures, literacy level and languages. One facilitator (NA) and 2-10 participants. Health Info team can teach this class as well. NAs and RDs may also provide info 1:1.

## Why

Physical inactivity is a major contributor to the growing 'obesity epidemic', and many other health problems. Needs assessment performed in summer of 2002 indicates many children and mothers do not get recommended levels of Physical Activity.

Parents of all children (low and high weight) want to know how to grow physically healthy children.

This session has been designed so parents will try some new/more physical activities with their children.

Some WIC agencies also have an interest in having parents complete and return surveys about neighborhood safety, so that WIC can more effectively advocate for neighborhood safety (using participant surveys). The use of these surveys has been limited to date.

## Time

This session can take as little as 20 minutes. But, it is bound to go longer if you do all the activities and/or have a larger group.

## Setup

WIC classroom, with chairs arranged in a circle. It can also be done as an individual contact, with two chairs together.

## Objectives

By the end of the class, participants will have:

- Engaged in **physically active play** together
- Identified **activities they can do at home** with their children, and **accessible recreation centers**
- Planned a **walk in a neighborhood to assess safety** and to report problems to WIC (optional)

## Lesson Overview

1. **Welcome and Introduction** 2 minutes
2. **Games You Like and Remember** 4 minutes
3. **The Value of Games!** 5 minutes
4. **Simple Games: Beach Ball Fun** 5 minutes  
or **Are You Ready?!** (Alternative Activity)
5. **Indoor Play Ideas: Dance Break and More!**  
5 minutes
6. **Benefits of Exercise** 2 minutes
7. **Wrap-Up: Take Home “Playing with Your  
Baby/Toddler/ 3-5 Year Old”**
8. **Walkability Checklist (Optional)** 2-3 minutes

## Materials

**Props/Equipment:**

- Beach Balls
- Jai Lai Milk Jugs
- Jump Rope
- Easel
- CD Player
- Storage container for props

**Importance of Physical Activity Statements (Cards)****Posters/Charts:**

- Class Objectives Chart
- Benefits of Exercise Chart ('Ooh What a Feeling')
- Physical Activity Pyramid
- Physical Activity Parents Can Do in Waiting Room (from "Playing with your 3-5 year old/Toddler")

**Reading Materials (for each participant, based on age of child):**

- "Playing with Your Baby" (E/S)
- "Playing with Your Toddler" (E/S)
- "Playing with Your 3-5 Year Old" (E/S)

**Other Materials:**

- "Local Recreation Programs" (not included here, needs to be gotten locally, by agency)
- Walkability Survey (optional – if your agency chooses to do this)

**Incentives:**

- Beach Balls
  - Sport Bottles
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## Getting Ready

1. We strongly suggest that you pre-read copies of the WIC pamphlets for this session:
  - "Playing with Your Baby" (E/S)
  - "Playing with Your Toddler" (E/S)
  - "Playing with Your 3-5 Year Old" (E/S)
2. Before teaching this session, create or locate a reference for "Local Recreation Programs."
3. You may want to consider the use of the walkability survey in your agency. If you add this piece, the session will take about 5 minutes longer. Revise the attached draft survey for your locale.

# Activities

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## 1.

### Welcome and Introduction

“Good morning/afternoon! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and today we have a fun program to offer you. We are going to learn about physical activities for children, and ways you can *turn off* the TV and video games, and *turn on* to physical play.”

Review the class objectives chart.

“By the end of this class, you will have:

1. *Participated* in an indoor physical activity.
  2. *Identified* activities you can do at home, including household and other inexpensive items that you can use in play.
  3. (Optional) Those of you who like to walk will have also made a plan to walk in your neighborhood to assess safety issues and report problems to WIC so that we can help you advocate for increased safety on the streets in your neighborhood.”
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## 2.

### Games You Like and Remember

4 minutes

“Think back to the days of jump rope, Tag, or Hide and Seek.”

“Turn to your neighbor, and discuss one or both of the following:

- What game (physical activity) do you like to do with your family?
- What game (physical activity) did you play often as a child?”

“In large group, let’s hear anything you want to share with the full group.”

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## 3.

### The Value of Games!

5 minutes

Volunteers read Importance of Physical Activity statements (cards).

“After each statement, consider:

How does this statement speak to you? In other words, what does it make you feel or think about?”

## Activities (continued)

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### 3. The Value of Games! (continued) 5 minutes

#### Importance of Physical Activity Statements (cards):

- **Very few youngsters participate in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis.**  
*WIC recommends that adults get at least 30 minutes and children at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day!*
- **Young children watch up to 28 hours of TV per week (4 hours/day).**  
*WIC recommends no more than 1 hour of TV a day!*
- **The number of overweight children is rising (1 out of 4 children) and more teenagers are suffering from problems associated with overweight such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and joint problems (knees and hips).**  
*WIC recommends that families keep weight under control during childhood to help prevent such problems later on.*

“These facts and recommendations can feel overwhelming. But knowledge is power! We think that knowing these things helps us to do something about it.”

“One thing that all families can do, which will make an enormous difference in your family’s health is physical activity.”

“NOW, while your child is young, is the time to start play activities that promote fitness. Fitness is important for everyone of ‘all sizes’ (and ages). Over all, fit kids usually perform better in school!”

“Today we will do 2 activities here – to give you ideas. And, we’ll offer you a booklet with many other wonderful ideas for daily play, and even birthday parties.”

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### 4. Simple Games: Beach Ball Fun 5 minutes

“Today every family gets a beach ball to take home. First we are going to play some very quick and easy games to show you new ideas for fun and fitness.”

## Activities (continued)

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### 4. Simple Games: Beach Ball Fun (continued) 5 minutes

1. Stand arms length from each other. Toss ball. Take a half step back and toss again. (Note: Learning how to step back like that develops more brain cells in your child -- coordinating, calculating distance, etc).
2. Now toss low, medium, high.
3. Roll the ball to each other.
4. Bowl the ball, using 3 empty water bottles.
5. Tell your child to throw the Yellow side, then the Red Side, the Blue.
6. With a same height partner (2 adults or 2 kids), stand back to back. Pass ball over head and bending low, back between feet. Pass ball in circles at waist level by passing from one side to the other. \*

*\* Educator: Be aware that for some participants this final activity may present a safety issue, if backsides collide. This activity may be left out. Just allow enough space, and call their attention to each other.*

In full group, after playing:

- “How did these activities feel?”
- “How did it feel to stretch as you passed the beach ball overhead, under, and then side-to-side?”
- “Not only does your child get a little exercise with this activity, but they are also learning important skills at the same time.”
- “What did you notice about teaching vocabulary while we were playing (colors, directions)?”

## Activities (continued)

4.

**Are You Ready?!**  
**(Alternative Activity to Beach Ball Fun)**  
**5 minutes**

If space is too limited for beach ball game, and a tape player is available.

Leader first demonstrates hand movements for each part of song, then plays the cassette and leads the group as follows:

Song	Response	Hand Movement
<i>Where are you?</i>	<i>Here I am!</i>	Hands up in the air, quick waving
<i>Are you ready?</i>	<i>You bet!</i>	With thumbs held up from fist, extend one arm, and then the other
<i>How are you doing?</i>	<i>Better and better!</i>	Clap hands once and then clap upper leg
<i>Give yourself a hand!</i>		High five to neighbor
<i>Heads, shoulder, knees, toes; Legs, waist, chin, nose.</i>		Touch each part as it is named and repeat with song

5.

**Indoor Play Ideas:  
Dance Break and More!**  
**5 minutes**

“Sometimes it is hard to get outside to the parks/playgrounds to allow your child to move around. Dancing is a great way for you to exercise inside the house. Pick a song 1-2 times a day for a Dance-Break with your kids! If you can keep it going 20-30 minutes, you will have a quality work-out!”

“There are also many very inexpensive toys, as well as several household items, that can provide great indoor fitness opportunities.”

## Activities (continued)

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### 5. Indoor Play Ideas (continued) 5 minutes

“Take a look at these. “

“What other creative or active ways do you use these items for fun?”

Item	Alternate Activities
Milk cartons	Play catch with a ball
Plastic Milk Jugs	Jai Lai
Jump rope	Place on floor and play jumping games
Rubber Bands	Jump Ropes, Chinese Jump Rope
Balloons	Bounce 1-2 up in the air, don't let them hit the ground
Empty boxes	Build towers
Chalk	Hop Scotch (outside activity)
Hula Hoop	Roll it across room, and toss ball or stuffie through
Bubbles	Jump and pop them!

“Wow, there are so many ideas! Which one of these ideas do you think you will use at home?”

“We'll hear a few responses.”

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### 6. Benefits of Exercise 2 minutes

Refer to the posted *Chart*. “Let's look at some of the benefits of fitness activities on the blue chart: ‘OOH what a feeling...!’”

**“OOH what a feeling...!”  
(Benefits of Physical Activity)**

- Flexibility
- Improves self-esteem
- Hand/eye coordination
- Better Breathing
- Improves endurance
- Helps reduce risk of diseases
- Reduces stress
- Builds strong bones
- Improves energy
- Helps control weight
- It is fun!

## Activities (continued)

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### 6. Benefits of Exercise (continued) 2 minutes

Share in large group:

“Which of these benefits is meaningful to you?  
What other benefits do you think of which aren’t included here?”

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### 7. Wrap-Up

#### Take Home “Playing with Your Baby/Toddler/3-5 Year Old”

“WIC has several references about play (physical activity) tailored for children of different ages. Please take the **appropriate brochure(s)**, according to your children’s age(s).”

“Some of the activities are posted on walls in the waiting room so you can try them out while waiting for FI, etc.”

“WIC also has a **Local Recreation Programs Listing**. Please consider taking a list of these local programs to help you find team sport programs, swimming pools, etc.”

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### 8. The Walkability Checklist (Optional) 2-3 minutes

“Most adults tell us that walking is their favorite physical activity.”

“There is a campaign traveling around America to make neighborhoods safer for walking. This month, we’d like to find out how safe your neighborhood walk is. Here’s the idea: Take your normal walk with your family in the neighborhood, then fill out this short questionnaire when you get home. If you found things that were unsafe about your neighborhood, we’d like to hear from you and report your findings to the traffic and safety people, so that we can help you clean up your neighborhood.”

“For example, I did this walking survey in my neighborhood and found an unleashed dog on 36th Street in Oakland. This Walkability Survey gives some ideas about what you can do to protect yourself in the unsafe situations that you find yourself in, and also ideas of things you can do to advocate for change in your neighborhood.”

## Activities (continued)

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8.

**The  
Walkability  
Checklist  
(Optional)  
(continued)  
2-3 minutes**

“If you’d like to take a survey home and bring it back to us, please take one. Great... If you bring it back, we will follow up on the problems you find and we’ll have a **gift** for your efforts!”

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# Learning Materials

Attached are:

- A draft **Walkability Survey** (you may want to edit and pilot it for your agency)
- **Fitness Statements** in Spanish and English

# Safe Neighborhood Walks Survey

Everyone benefits from walking, but walking needs to be safe and easy. Take a walk with your child and use this checklist to decide if your neighborhood is a friendly place to walk. Pick a place to walk, like the route to school, a friend's house, or just somewhere fun to go. If you find problems, bring us this checklist, so we can help make things better.

**Was Your Walk Great? Share the Location with others in your neighborhood.**

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1. Check if you did **not have enough room to walk safely**:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks or paths started and stopped        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks were broken or cracked  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too much traffic                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Something else? _____             |

Locations of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Check if was **not easy to cross streets**:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road was too wide   | <input type="checkbox"/> Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parked cars blocked our view of traffic                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Trees or plants blocked our view of traffic  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Something else? _____                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross |   |

Locations of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Check if **drivers did not behave well**:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backed out of driveways without looking                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not yield to people crossing street |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turned into people crossing streets                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Drove too fast                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sped up to make it through traffic lights or drove through red lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Something else? _____                   |

Locations of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

4. If you it was **not easy to follow safety rules**:

- You could not cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?
- You did not stop and look left, right, and left again before crossing streets?
- You did not walk on sidewalks, or shoulders (if no sidewalks), facing traffic?
- You could not cross a busy street at a traffic light?

Locations of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Check if your **walk was not pleasant**:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs more grass, flowers, or trees | <input type="checkbox"/> Scary dogs            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suspicious activity                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Not well lit          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dirty, lots of litter or trash      | <input type="checkbox"/> Something else? _____ |

Locations of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Bring Your Survey Back to WIC for a Free Gift.**

We will help you fix problems you found in your neighborhood and share your suggestions for great neighborhood walks.

During your walk **how did you feel physically?** Could you go as far or as fast as you wanted? Were you short of breath, tired, or did you have sore feet or muscles? The next page also has suggestions about walking for exercise.

### **Quick health check**

Could not go as far or as fast as you wanted  
Tired, short of breath, or had sore feet or muscles

- Start with short walks and work up to 30 minutes of walking most days
- Invite a friend or child along
- Replace some driving trips with walking trips
- Get media to do a story about the health benefits of walking
- Call parks and recreation department about community walks
- Encourage corporate support for employee walking programs

### **1. Did you have room to walk safely?**

Sidewalks or paths started and stopped  
Sidewalks were broken/cracked  
Sidewalks were blocked  
No sidewalks, paths or shoulder  
Too much traffic

- Pick another route for now
- Tell local transportation engineers or public works department about specific problems, and provide a copy of this checklist
- Speak at board/development meetings
- Write or petition the city for walkways
- Gather neighborhood signatures
- Make media aware of problem

### **2. Was it easy to cross streets?**

Road too wide  
Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross  
Crosswalks/traffic signals needed  
View of traffic blocked by parked cars, trees, or plants  
Needed curb ramps; ramp needed repair

- Pick another route for now
- Share problems and checklist with local transportation engineers or public works department
- Trim your trees and bushes that block the street, and ask neighbors to do the same
- Leave nice notes on problem cars, asking owners not to park there
- Push for crosswalks, signals, or parking changes at city meetings
- Give report identifying parked cars that are safety hazards to transportation engineer
- Report illegally parked cars to the police
- Request that public works department trims trees and plants
- Make media aware of problem

### 3. Did drivers behave well?

Backed without looking  
Did not yield  
Turned into walkers  
Drove too fast  
Sped up to make traffic

- Pick another route for now
- Set an example: slow down and be considerate of walkers
- Encourage your neighbors to do the same
- Report unsafe driving to police
- Organize neighborhood speed watch program
- Petition for more enforcement
- Ask city planners and traffic engineers for traffic calming ideas
- Request protected turn signals
- Ask schools about getting crossing guards at key locations where children cross

### 4. Could you follow safety rules?

Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen  
Stop and look left, right, left before crossing  
Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic (if no sidewalks)  
Cross with the light

- Educate yourself about safe walking and teach your child
- Organize parents in your neighborhood to walk children to school
- Encourage schools to teach pedestrian safety
- Help schools start Safe Routes to School programs
- Encourage corporate support for flex schedules so parents can walk children to school

### 5. Was your walk pleasant?

Needs grass,  
flowers, trees  
Scary dogs  
Suspicious activity  
Not well lit  
Dirty, littered

- Pick another route for now
- Ask neighbors to keep dogs leashed or fenced
- Report scary dogs to animal control department
- Report suspicious activity to police
- Report lighting needs to the city
- Take a walk with a trash bag
- Plant trees, flowers, and bushes in your yard
- Request increased police enforcement
- Start a crime-watch program in your neighborhood.
- Organize a community cleanup day
- Sponsor a tree planting day
- Sponsor a neighborhood beautification day

## **Fitness Statements** in Spanish and English

**Hoy en dia hay mas  
adolescentes que padecen  
de diabetes,  
alta presion,  
y dolor de coyunturas.**

**Anteriormente estas  
enfermedades eran para  
personas mayores**

**Hoy en día los niños  
hacen menos actividades  
físicas**

**Los niños necesitan 1 hora  
de actividad diariamente,  
Adultos necesitan 30  
minutos por día.**

**Hoy en dia hay muchos  
mas ninos que sufren de  
sobre peso**

**1 de cada 4 ninos esta  
sobre peso.**

**Anteriormente (1960's) uno  
de cada 10 ninos estaba  
sobre peso.**

**Muchos de los niños ven  
hasta 28 horas de  
televisión por semana  
(4 horas por día)**

**Se recomienda no más de  
1 hora por día.**

**Very few youngsters  
participate in vigorous  
physical activity on  
a regular basis.**

**WIC recommends that adults  
get at least 30 minutes and  
children at least 60 minutes of  
physical activity every day!**

**Young children watch  
up to 28 hours of TV  
per week (4 hours/day).**

**WIC recommends no more  
than 1 hour of TV a day!**

**The number of overweight children is rising (1 out of 4 children) and more teenagers are suffering from problems associated with overweight such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and joint problems (knees and hips).**

**WIC recommends that families keep weight under control during childhood to help prevent such problems later on.**

# Designer Notes and Reviewer Comments

**Design Title:** *Fitness for Families*

## **Designer(s) Contact information:**

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## **Designer's Notes for Future Users:**

- 1. What have we found works especially well in this session?**
- 2. What kind of preparation and skills seem important for the educator/ facilitator in this session?**
- 3. What, if anything, might you want to improve upon or adjust when you use this design?**

The Walkability Survey did not produce an enthusiastic response in our county, however, it is a tool that has significant potential. Perhaps other communities might be more interested, especially if they have a support network. If you want to shorten the lesson, you can exclude the Walkability Survey. We include it here as "optional" so that other professionals could learn about it, consider it.

## **4. Other Comments on Context or History of This Design**

## **Reviewer's Comments:**

### **1. What seems important to preserve in this session?**

The facts at the start of the session could feel real heavy (even accusatory) for participants. But, if shared in dialogue, with the intent of inspiration, they can be very useful. Work with your facilitators on how to achieve this, and check with the clients – how did they feel? What was useful? What would they suggest be changed in this part?

Offering a list of recreation centers nearby is such a great show of sincerity on the part of the designers/ teachers. I would strongly recommend developing such a list – even if it is very short – of places where your participants have opportunities for physical activity, outside their homes, at low cost. If you can, check out the places before you recommend them!

### **2. What ideas might you try to make the design work even better?**

Based on observation of similar sessions, I think that the “games” have the potential to engender resistance among some adult clients. If the facilitator talks and works with the clients as adults and not as children, then this can be very fun and feel good for clients. Explain why this is designed to get everyone up and active:

1. Because we, too, as adults can benefit from the laughter and movement of these games;
2. Our kids like us to play with them, and we may not often get the time; and,
3. It's easier to remember these games (for a rainy day at home) when we have done them recently – like here, today.

**Reviewed by:** Val Uccellani, March 2004