

## Don't Lose it Over the Summer

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Two years ago we had a great discussion with several Lincoln Public Schools PE teachers questioning whether kids returning to school after the summer break were in better shape or worse. Some thought the kids were more active during the summer and therefore were in better shape when they returned to school. Others thought just the opposite, theorizing that too many kids were inside playing video games over the summer and eating junk food.

We decided to answer the questions ourselves last school year by conducting fitness testing in the fall when kids started school and again in the spring before they went home. Would the kids do better when the school year started or when the school

year ended? The answer? On average kids became more fit during the school year and were less fit after the summer. On the individual level, there is a wide variety between students. Some likely are in better shape after an active summer while others lose ground due to being inactive and indoors. So, be cautious about assuming that all kids are inside and inactive. But, on the community level it appears we lose it over the summer.

Other studies tracking child obesity also confirm these results when measuring kid's weights throughout the year. Kids tend to maintain or achieve a healthier weight during the school year, but then struggle over summer vacation. This is especially true in lower income and minority students. Surprisingly, one of these studies also followed underweight children and found that these kids did better during the school year as well. The school environment actu-

ally helps support healthy weight for kids with either issue!

So what should parents do? Some helpful tips include enrolling your kids in activities over the summer and preselecting your children's food options. There are many summer activities for kids including youth sports through YMCA, summer school programs run by the community learning centers, and programs run by neighborhood recreation centers. Options range from competitive youth sports, non-competitive programs like dance, or simple open gym/pick-up style games at recreation centers. One community level option we want to encourage for older kids is joining the Lincoln effort to repeat its winning performance on the national bike challenge. You can check out a list of summer activity ideas fit for any budget at [www.healthylincoln.org/fuelyoursummer](http://www.healthylincoln.org/fuelyoursummer)

Another way parents can help is preselecting their

children's food choices by only stocking the refrigerator and pantry with healthier options. It may seem a little too obvious, but the easiest way to keep your kids from consuming junk food and sugar-sweetened beverages is to simply not buy them. Kids consume what they have in the kitchen, so if only healthy options are present, that is what they will eat. Another strategy is to prepare fruits and vegetables so they are ready to eat. Unwashed grapes seem to sit in the bag, but as soon as they are washed and move to a container they soon disappear. The same is true of vegetables that are cut into bite size pieces. A little prep on weekends can lead to a much better week of eating for both kids and parents.

Our goal is to help Lincoln become more fit and healthy. Consider taking some of these healthy steps today!

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## FUEL YOUR SUMMER.

Got a thirst for fun? Run. Jump. Play. And when you're ready for a break, skip the sugary drinks and reach for ice cold water instead.

Drink to Happiness. Drink to Healthiness. Drink Water.



[HealthyLincoln.org](http://HealthyLincoln.org)

# DON'T LOSE IT OVER THE SUMMER!

Local fitness testing in school aged students shows that the summer is not being used to get fit! Below are some suggestions of how to add activity to your daily routine so that you DON'T LOSE IT OVER THE SUMMER!

## EXPLORE PARKS AND TRAILS:

With 125 parks and 131 miles of trails, Lincoln is a great place to explore nature and get some exercise!

- ▶ Bike Riding
- ▶ Sand Volleyball
- ▶ Frisbee golf
- ▶ Play catch-football, baseball, etc.
- ▶ Take a walk
- ▶ Kick the soccer ball
- ▶ Skate Parks
- ▶ Splash parks
- ▶ Swimming Pools

## OUT AND ABOUT:

Make activity a part of your daily errands

- ▶ Park at the end of the lot and walk
- ▶ Skip the elevator, take the stairs
- ▶ Walk to the grocery store for a few small items

## AFTER DARK:

Spice up some old fashioned games with after dark alternatives, great for the backyard with a group of friends!

- ▶ Flashlight tag
- ▶ Flashlight limbo
- ▶ Sardines
- ▶ Capture the moon

\*Don't know how to play? Visit our website

## HELP AROUND THE HOUSE:

Grab the headphones or crank the stereo! You'll not only get a good workout while helping out mom and dad, but you'll have fun doing it!!

- ▶ Mow the lawn
- ▶ Wash & wax the car
- ▶ Dust & vacuum
- ▶ Work in the garden
- ▶ Walk the dog

## DREARY DAYS:

A few clouds or rain drops don't have to prevent you from staying active!

- ▶ Masking tape makes a great indoor hopscotch path
- ▶ Walk around the mall
- ▶ kidsbowlfree.com
- ▶ Roller skating
- ▶ Balloon Volleyball

## MORE IDEAS AND LOCAL EVENTS:

[www.healthylincoln.org/fuelyoursummer](http://www.healthylincoln.org/fuelyoursummer)

## MINI BURSTS:

Squeeze in movement during breaks and when you're short on time

- ▶ Make flash cards with a variety of activities to perform when you have a spare 5 minutes.
- ▶ Spend 3 minutes dancing to your favorite song
- ▶ Run in place, dance, or stay moving during TV commercials (Limit screen time to 2 hours per day)



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