

# Keep kids active and healthy this summer

**By James Miller**

Even in summer, screentime competes with outdoor activities. As electronic devices have become more and more popular and readily available, we have noticed a significant increase in obesity in our pediatric population. It's far too easy to allow our children to stay home watching shows, playing electronics or other video games. The best way to combat this is to encourage your children to be active.

There are many ways to get kids moving. The easiest, cheapest way would be to get them to the park. Billings offers multiple parks that are free. Families can enjoy walking, running, bicycling and exploring nature along trails.

Billings Parks and Recreation Department offers free summer aquatics fun at spray grounds in North Park, Terry Park, Highland Park, Castle Rock Park and South Park. Free wading pools at Pioneer and Hawthorne parks are scheduled to open at noon on June 14.

City pools at South Park and Rose Park are scheduled to open daily, weather permitting. The Parks and Recreation Department sells season pool passes and offers swimming lessons with all registration information at the city of Billings website.

If your family would enjoy getting out of town, there are still more options available. Plan a family trip with camping, hiking, or fishing. All three of these keep you active and enjoying the great outdoors. These are relatively low cost ways to stay active and you don't have to go very far from Billings. In fact, there are a few fishing spots right in the city, such as Lake Elmo State Park in the Heights and the Shiloh Conservation Area on the West End. Both of those parks also have walking trails where you are likely to see a variety of birds and other wildlife.

Sports are great for keeping children active. Soccer and baseball are the two most popular children's sports, but not the only ones. Your children may enjoy dance and gymnastics. There are many camps out there that allow for children to get involved and be active. Your child may make a new best friend, just by being active.

Along with being active, it is important to eat healthy and to make sure your child is putting healthy things into their body. Allow them to help make their lunch for the day. Offer nutritious snacks. Be sure you know where your child is at all times and who they are hanging out with. Talk to your children about the risks of using substances, such as nicotine products, vape pens or other illicit drugs. These substances can be extremely harmful to your child's health and development.

Now get out to enjoy summer and explore the city of Billings!

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