



Bundle up and beat the winter blues

With fewer daylight hours to play outside and colder temperatures freezing little ones' toes, it's no surprise that many kids catch the winter blues in January. Despite these chilly factors, there are many fun ways for kids to stay active and happy throughout the cold winter months.

Remember — the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 60 minutes of physical activity for children and adolescents each day. "It's always important to utilize your child or teen's current interests, then get creative about using those interests to keep them moving," said Andrea Hedge, recreation therapist at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

When inclement weather makes outside trips too daunting, it's easy for parents to use electronics as entertainment. A little is fine, but parents need to limit the amount of time kids spend in front of television and computer screens to less than two hours each day.

Try these fun ways to keep kids moving this winter:

- Add a "recess time" to each evening for kids to do an activity of their choice

to get their bodies up and moving. There are plenty of fun body-moving activities for kids to do inside like musical chairs, jumping rope or dancing to music.

- Winter weather doesn't always have to keep kids indoors. With the snow come great opportunities to get outside and play. Did you know there are more than 10 different types of snowflakes influenced by the temperature and humidity of the cloud it was created in? Catch a snowflake on a piece of dark paper and use a magnifying glass to identify its shape.

- Snow also can offer a fun way to exercise. Challenge the kids in a snowman-building competition or hide out in snow forts.

- Encourage your teens to help the neighbors by offering to shovel their sidewalks or driveways.

- Cross country skiing is a great sport, even for adults and children with no experience. You can ski at a walking pace, making it possible for even those new to skis to enjoy the journey.

Experts from the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital provided the information for this column.