

TIPS ON INVOLVING YOUR KIDS

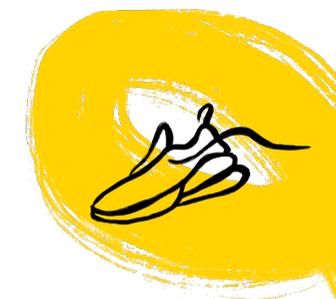
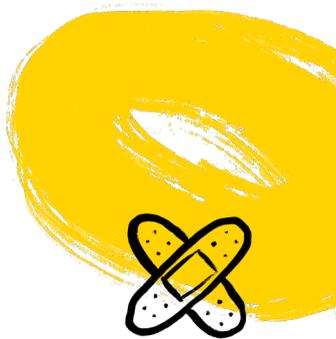
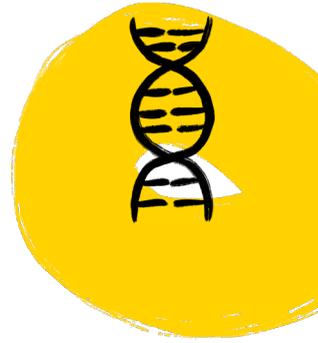
Kids love to run and play—and they especially like playing with their parents! However, as anyone with young children knows, kids are not likely to run for more than a few minutes without a reason—it is unlikely, and not safe, to send a young child on a regular long endurance run. At the same time, most Canadian children fail to meet the recommended 60 minutes a day of physical activity. As the mother of two young children and a coach of youth aged athletes, I have put together some ideas of how to incorporate running into your child's life in a way that is both fun and safe.

I would suggest you set the goal with your child of completing 5 km on foot (walk or run) by the end of 4 weeks as part of the Million Reasons Run. Children love goals, so explaining to them the reason for the run and how they can help others by running 5 km to raise funds and awareness for Children's Hospitals.

I would recommend a charting poster with stars to track achievement or some other visual system for motivation. You can either track days of play ("training") or by total distance if you have your own GPS watch. I would not recommend a GPS watch for children yet as it makes the play too serious and structured—however, parents may be interested just how far they ran during their play sessions! This plan is geared towards family with children approximately 6-10 years old—most older children will be ready by 10 or 12 years old to follow the Beginner Run Plan. Here is a guide and of course this can be adapted to meet your needs, but I would use a similar approach to preparing my enthusiastic 6 year for a 5 km walk/run effort in 4 weeks.

I would aim to do the activities 2-3 times a week for 30-60 minutes and ideally include a few family members or friends to keep it fun and social. Most of all, use your own imagination to modify and adjust the ideas to suit your time, motivation, and unique children/family needs! Below you will find some easy warm up games to incorporate for the first 5-10 minutes. It is also a good idea to help children "cool down" again with some light stretching, or gentle movements. As always, ensure they have proper footwear (running shoes), lightweight and breathable clothing, water bottle and snack, hat, sunscreen, etc.

Finally, it is important to fully participate in the games and activities—not only does this allow for great family bonding, but the kids will also be more motivated if they know that their parents are also working hard towards the goal of completing 5 km.



WEEK ONE

ACTIVITY NAME	Guess the Segment
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	30-40 minutes
OBJECTIVE	Goal Setting/Course Reconnaissance
LOCATION	On Course
DESCRIPTION	<p>Spend some time on a mapping app to measure out 5 km. Is it from your house to your school? Or to a friend's house? Is it across your neighbourhood or town? Does anyone really know how far 5 km is until they measure the distance? Using Strava (app to phone) you can head out for a walk and guess your distance along the way and get an instant confirmation. Play a game: <i>Guess the Segment</i>—everyone in the group guesses how much ground you have covered in the most recent segment. Points can be awarded to the person whose guess is most accurate. Be sure to turn around before anyone gets too tired, hungry, or bored. You want to keep this fun! I would recommend 10-15 minutes “out” for the first attempt. When you get back, figure out how far you’ve walked and how much farther you would need to go to cover 5 km. Bonus points if you throw in a few sprints along the way.</p> <p><i>Extension: Back at home, challenge your kids to design their own Saucony Shoe just like the SickKids Ambassadors!</i></p>
ACTIVITY NAME	Track Time!
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	2-3 km
OBJECTIVE	Distance Run
LOCATION	Track
DESCRIPTION	<p>Head to your local track OR make your own “track” on a nearby playing field. For many children, a local track is a novelty and it is exciting to run around! Depending on the number of people in your group, design a relay race so that everyone gets a chance to run with the baton. Start with a “warm up game” (see ideas below) to get the muscles warmed up and to avoid injury. Then do a family lap together so you can look at the “exchange lines” at each 100m mark. The relay can be modified for parents or older/stronger children to perhaps run farther than younger children—maybe the children run 100m and the parents run 200m? Try a variety of distances such as: 4 x 100m relay for a group of 4, or 4 x 200m for a group of 2 where the finishing runner must run across the field in time to receive the baton again. Try a few runs at the distance: can you beat your family personal best if everyone runs their fastest? Can you create a “handicap” for a team challenge (either give a head start to someone or change the distances so teams can finish as close together as possible)? For example, a strong parent runner could run a whole lap by him/herself while the children or other adults do baton exchanges. Change the distances and talk about pacing—if you go farther, you need to adjust your pace (kids don't always understand this!). While at the track, try running into the sandpit and maybe even some *safe* stair climb races on the stadium stairs. 30 minutes should fly by while exploring the track!</p> <p><i>Extension: before you go, make homemade batons from old paper towel rolls.</i></p>
ACTIVITY NAME	Snakes and Ladders Race Day
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	
OBJECTIVE	Game Day
LOCATION	Local Park/Playground
DESCRIPTION	<p>Activity 1: Create a modified “Snacks and Ladder” course. Prepare some cardboard landing pages with movement challenges on each sheet (i.e.. 10 x jumping jacks / 4 x hops / 3 x snake crawls / 5 x Giraffe Stretches / 2 x forward rolls) Some of the clues might be to go back 3 steps or go forward 5 steps. Space out the challenges across a soccer field and when the runner reaches the end, they need to run all the way back to the start line. Track points for the most course completions. Given how spread out the runners will be, it is possible that each person should roll their own dice, but then again, running back to the center location to share a die might mean more running!</p> <p>Activity 2: Who doesn't love a few old fashioned races? This is a good time to set up a few head-to-head races or staggered starts to make the races more even. Try a variety of distances including sprints and field laps. Be sure to give enough rest for kids and not push too hard—this should all be fun!</p>



WEEK TWO

ACTIVITY NAME	Superheroes on Course!
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	3 km
OBJECTIVE	Distance Run
LOCATION	On Course
DESCRIPTION	<p>With only 2 weeks to go before the “5 km Million Reasons Run” Run, today is a great day to scope out the 5 km course you plan to use. Plan to do a 2-3 km section of the course—again, choose a distance that is a challenge, but still leaves people feeling good when they return home! We want our kids to be keen and feel encouraged about their goal. Today’s challenge is to dress as superhero (anything really goes—astronaut, princess, the Hulk, etc.). As you set out on course, each person makes up story about the journey as it relates to the characters in your group. For example, my children love dressing up as fire and police people, so we have lots of fun running to put out fires and catch bad guys. During your walk breaks, either the parent or child adds to the story, then ends with the challenge to run. For example, “bad guy spotted by white truck on the next driveway, and GO!” Kids love acting out stories and incorporating running into a moving story is a great way to get them motivated.</p> <p><i>Extension: when you get home, write down your story in a book—have your children help recount the story you made up and type it up with room for their own illustrations.</i></p>
ACTIVITY NAME	Wacky Laps!
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	
OBJECTIVE	Mobility/Coordination/Strength
LOCATION	Track
DESCRIPTION	<p>Head back to the track again—but this time come prepared for all sorts of wacky fun. Bring a deck of cards along with you (face value only) and have three people draw a card. The first person gets to decide “how” you move and the second person gets to decide “how far.” The third person decides what you do when you arrive—and the number of exercises depends on the card they drew. If you only have 2 people participating, decide together on the 3rd challenge. For example, ways to move can include: backwards, side, skipping, hopping, walking, jogging, sprinting, crawling, etc. and things you do: sit ups, push ups, burpees, cartwheels or any other crazy way of moving. If you have energy at the end, do another team relay or exploration activities from the first visit.</p>
ACTIVITY NAME	Scavenger Hunt
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	
OBJECTIVE	Endurance
LOCATION	New Park Location
DESCRIPTION	<p>Go to a good park location where you can explore. Do an internet search prior to going for “Outdoor Scavenger Hunt for Kids” for a list that you think is most appropriate for your child and location. Plan to do 20-30 minutes of searching with lots of walking and running in between. Bonus points if you can find somewhere kids can run hills and single track trails—they love changing terrain.</p>



WEEK THREE

ACTIVITY NAME	Obstacle Course
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	
OBJECTIVE	Endurance
LOCATION	Local Park/Playground OR Natural Environment
DESCRIPTION	Depending on your own resources, you can build your own obstacle course (with hoola hoops, tires, bean bags, etc) or go to a playground and create one. Be sure to plan lots of running within the obstacle course. For example, slide down the slide x 2 and then run a lap around the playground. We also like to do them in the natural environment—balancing on fallen tree trunks, hopping over rocks, forging small creeks. The obstacle course does not need to be formal or competitive—each person can choose the next challenge or obstacle and move cooperatively to the challenge. Ideally, create some space between challenges for some short runs.
ACTIVITY NAME	Move the Campfire & Popsicle Run
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	
OBJECTIVE	Game Day
LOCATION	Local Park/Playground
DESCRIPTION	<p>Activity 1: <i>Move the Campfire Relay Race</i>. Break up group in two teams. Using gathered sticks, twigs, and stones (or other objects easily found/supplied) make mini-campfires. Then pick a spot approximately 50 m away from the campfire to “move” the campfire—make up a story about “why” the campfire needs to be moved (fire safety!) The only catch is only one item at a time can be moved; whichever team successfully moves their campfire first taking turns running supplies to the new location wins. Bonus points for the team that can re-create their campfire the best. You can also do this with Jenga blocks or 2x4 blocks to build “castles” or pyramids or any structure. First plan the construction and build the structure, then have relay races of moving and re-assembling your structure.</p> <p>Activity 2: <i>Popsicle Run</i>. Make a loop using cones or lines on a field. Challenge the runners to complete as many laps as possible, collecting a popsicle stick each time he/she passes ‘go.’ (Obviously you can choose any item to hand out for each lap—twigs work just fine too!).</p>
ACTIVITY NAME	Brown Bag Scavenger Hunt
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	3-4 km
OBJECTIVE	Run Prep
LOCATION	On Course
DESCRIPTION	<p>Kids love scavenger hunts! To minimize your preparation (so you don’t have to plant clues all over your community!), prepare a handful of clues in a brown paper bag. Ideally, they are prepared sequentially so you will want to fold them and number them on the outside. Think about clues along your route—are there any stores, community buildings, parks, landmarks along the way that can be clues to run towards? Ideally, the clues are approximately 400-800m apart so the children have to run a few minutes between clues. Aim for 3-4 kilometers. This will be a good chance to discuss the landmarks for the “real deal” so you can talk use them as a way to break up the run (i.e., after we hit the playground, we only have to go a few more minutes before we will pass your Grandma’s House and then we are almost done!) This is a good way to work on mental imaging, visualization, and positive thinking, and can help your child mentally prepare for the race.</p> <p><i>Extension: When you get home, have your child draw a map with landmarks and approximate distances. This can be their “race day map.”</i></p>



WEEK FOUR

ACTIVITY NAME	Fast/Fast/Slow/Stop Follow the Leader
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	2-3 km
OBJECTIVE	Endurance
LOCATION	New Park Location
DESCRIPTION	Discover a new park or trail system. Each person gets to be the leader for a designated period of time. The leader gets to call the pace “fast” or “slow” or “stop” or “super booster fast.” Everyone runs behind that person for a few minutes—ideal if there are lots of choices (where to run and different routes to choose). Take turns leading and following.
ACTIVITY NAME	Puzzle Hunt Geo Catch
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	30 minutes
OBJECTIVE	Sprints
LOCATION	Local Park/Playground OR Natural Environment
DESCRIPTION	Do one or two “warm up games” and then the Main Game: Create your own “geo cache” challenge at a local field/playground. Using a puzzle you already own, hide (but not too hard!) the pieces in used containers (i.e. yogurt, margarine) and place them around a field/area. Have the group run around to collect the pieces and assemble it on a picnic table. If you want, you can include clues or you can just tell your children how many objects need to be collected.
ACTIVITY NAME	A Million Reasons Run
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE/TIME	
OBJECTIVE	The Big Day!
LOCATION	On Course
DESCRIPTION	<p>Congratulations to you and your child/children for making it to the big day! Be sure to talk about what an accomplishment it is to have prepared for today and how important it is to be part of a community that cares for each other. It might be nice (but not at all required!) to do something fun—matching team t-shirts (decorate your own!), decorated bib numbers, or speedy new shoe. Plan a celebration treat for afterwards—maybe with token medals or a trip for ice cream. After all, adults love the post race celebration as much as kids!</p> <p><i>Extension: Make posters and banners for the finish line (or on course if appropriate)—can include some of the “million reasons” to do the run. Remember the goal is to have fun and to aim for completion—it does not matter how fast you cover 5 km or how many walk/snack/play breaks you take along the way!</i></p>

