

Surviving the Summer: Ideas to Keep the Person with PWS Healthy and Happy

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As we begin the summer months, many of us start to feel a bit anxious about ways to keep a child or adult with PWS active, healthy and happy. Here are a few suggestions and ideas to keep in mind.

Many people with PWS do best when they are kept busy. Over activity can result in fatigue which may lead to behavior escalations. On the other hand, due to their sedentary nature, they often have too much down time. The key is to provide a balance of physical activity with some "down time". This approach allows the person with PWS to have the exercise and activity they need as well as some time for relaxation.

Check postings in your library or other community centers that may identify information about summer programs that are offered. Community Recreation programs and the YMCA are good places to look for special classes or activities. Communities without a library may have a book mobile that may stop by weekly.

Be creative on your library visits. Sneak a bit of exercise into this activity. Walk to the library. If you live far away from your library, park your car a few blocks away.

Libraries usually have a summer reading program. Some have found the summer reading program (with the oral book reports) to be too difficult.



If this is true for you, **talk to your librarian**. Most are very open to doing anything to include all children. Here are some ideas for alternate ways to do a book report:

- Make a collage of pictures from a magazine that reflects characters from the book.
- Draw a simple picture about the story.
- Have your child tell you about their favorite part or character and you record it for them.

Many children and adults with PWS enjoy and are often very successful at swimming. Enroll in swimming lessons and/or attend open swimming opportunities for a way to combine exercise with fun. Many communities have new and elaborate water parks. Climbing up and down the water slide can provide another opportunity for exercise and fun.

Bowling is another activity that provides some physical activity with fun. Many bowling alleys offer summer discounts or student specials.

"Board Game Day" was a big hit at our house. This was typically reserved for that scorcher day when being outside was not a good idea or when it was raining. Everyone took a turn to play their favorite board game.

Taking a short break to run through the sprinkler to cool off is another way of sneaking in that exercise.

Play "Movie Theater". Rent a video; set up a movie theater; and sell movie tickets to family and friends. It can be a time to relax, stay cool and join in the fun. Include an ice cold lemonade as well as fat free popcorn. Many libraries lend videos for free.

A trip to a local playground can also provide a time of fun as well as a way to burn off a few calories.



Other activities that can help fill the days include miniature golf; a trip to the movie theater; a walk at the mall and/or a bike ride.

Scooters as well as tricycles can provide the physical activity our children so desperately need. Some are able to ride the standard two-wheeler; while others may need an adaptive bike or a tandem (a bicycle built for two). Some bike shops have these available for rent. Avoid motorized bikes – they don't provide any physical exertion and require a high level of safety and judgment. Don't forget the bike helmet.

Scheduling events on the same day of the week can provide consistency. Not all children need this degree of consistency. However, if the person you support with PWS does ... this may be one way to do it. A calendar may be helpful as well.

MONDAY – "Library Day"
TUESDAY – "Swimming Day"
WEDNESDAY- "Play Day"
THURSDAY – "Movie Day"
FRIDAY – "Board Game Day"
SATURDAY – "Special Activity Day – Golfing, Bowling..."
SUNDAY – A Day of Rest!!!!

Take a walk or hike. Make up a scavenger hunt. Play a game – make it fun.

Simple Walking Game

- Take 8 steps and count out loud with every step;
- Stop and kick one leg to the side and say "We";
- Kick the other leg out to the side and say "Are";
- Bend your knees up and down and say "A little bit"
- Bend forward at the waist and say "crazy".
- Then ... start again.

Look for free concerts or other community events. During the summer, many communities host special evening activities.

I hope this handout gives you a few more ideas to help your family have a happy, healthy summer.



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