



Youth Fit 4 Life

DEVELOPED BY YMCA OF METRO ATLANTA
and CHILDREN'S HEALTHCARE OF ATLANTA

PROGRAM TRAINING MANUAL | AGES 9-12

WEEKS 1 - 24

Preface

Welcome to Youth Fit 4 Life, a collaboration between YMCA of Metro Atlanta and Strong4Life,SM the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta child wellness movement.

Our Nation's Big Problem

Childhood obesity rates in our country are staggering, and they show that the children in our country are in a serious health crisis. Children who are overweight are now suffering from diseases, once seen only in adults, such as hypertension, liver and kidney disease, and type 2 diabetes.

The YMCA and Strong4Life share a passion to improve the health of Georgia's children by creating and offering programs that promote healthy habits among families in our state.

Youth Fit 4 Life Program

Developed from validated research in the fields of health psychology, counseling, applied behavior analysis, exercise physiology, and nutrition science, Youth Fit 4 Life is designed to provide a fun after-school experience that helps children develop healthy nutrition and physical activity habits. Our program engages students with daily lessons and activities that drive behavioral change over time. Time spent in fun activities will increase fitness levels and reinforce lessons learned. Children will work on goal setting and monitoring progress, changing their mindset to think positively about themselves and their capabilities, and learning how to recruit family and friends to support them on their journey.

Youth Fit 4 Life Instructors

You have been selected to serve as a Youth Fit 4 Life instructor because we think you can be a great leader and a role model. After training, you will be ready to use this guide and other Youth Fit 4 Life resources to teach daily physical activities and nutrition lessons. Thank you for your important work in helping children thrive and for being part of the Youth Fit 4 Life team.

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Program Components

This manual gives you activities and lessons to teach each day, but you have the ability to make the program come to life. The more engaged, excited, and involved you are as the program instructor, the better the program and the more excited participants will be. The purpose of this section is to better explain the program components to help you accomplish this.

Be Physically Active

Youth Fit 4 Life strives to engage participants in at least 30 minutes of daily moderate and vigorous physical activity and to increase their physical activity at home.

The program highlights **Isolated Movements** in order to reinforce proper form and to provide participants with movements that can be performed anywhere without equipment in order to help improve their cardiovascular fitness, strength, and flexibility. Youth Fit 4 Life believes in the importance of children finding physical activity fun. The **Warm-Up** and **Activity** sections are intended to reinforce the lessons and to get participants' heart rates up while they are having fun.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Participants should remain active — if you see participants standing around during an activity, ask them to jog in place, hop around the playing area, or do some jumping jacks.
- In the midst of high-intensity activities, avoid selecting any activities which involve children placing their heads below heart level until after an adequate cooldown. For example, avoid bear crawls, planks, push-ups, army crawls, or crab walks during high-intensity activities. Introduce stationary, isolated-movement activities or activities on the “ground” before or after the high-intensity activities, not mixed with or during the high-intensity activities (indicated in game by phrase: ♥ “No head below heart”).
- Do not use physical activity as a punishment, and do not take away physical activity participation as a punishment.
- Involve isolated movements when you can.
- Randomly select participants who are identified as “it” (e.g., have them number off one through three, and select all the threes to be “it”). Never allow participants to be chosen as “it” for an activity based on their ability; never allow them to “pick teams.”
- Avoid elimination games. We want all participants to be active for the entire activity session.
- Avoid games where participants are standing more than moving (e.g., relays where only one person is active at a time).
- Emphasize “safe tagging” (a light touch on the shoulder); unsafe tagging includes hard contact that might cause the person being tagged to fall down.