

Why should children be doing physical exercise...

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Perhaps a great article for your clubs newsletters... Only six out of 10 children aged between five and 14 years participate in sport outside of school, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A quarter of Australian children and teenagers are overweight or obese, indicating that we need to foster a more sports-minded culture that encourages children to be physically active.

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- A quarter of Australian children and teenagers are overweight or obese, indicating that we need to foster a more sports-minded culture that encourages children to be physically active. People who are active dramatically reduce their risk of many diseases, including heart disease and osteoporosis.
- Regular exercise is also known to reduce the risk of emotional problems such as anxiety and depression.
- Benefits of sport for children
- Reduced risk of obesity
- Increased cardiovascular fitness
- Healthy growth of bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons
- Improved coordination and balance
- A greater ability to physically relax and, therefore, avoid the complications of chronic muscular tension (such as headache or back ache)
- Improved sleep
- Mental health benefits, such as greater confidence
- Improved social skills
- Improved personal skills, including cooperation and leadership.

The Australian Government recommends that:

‘Children and young people should participate in at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity every day’.

‘Children and young people should not spend more than two hours a day using electronic media for entertainment (such as computer games, internet, TV), particularly during daylight hours’. These recommendations are a guide to the minimum level of physical activity required for good health.

ARE YOUR CHILDREN DOING THE MINIMUM?????

According to the Bureau of Statistics, over the 12 months prior to April 2009 in Australia, 1.7 million or 63 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 years participated in at least one sport outside of school

hours that had been organised by a school, club or association. The participation rate for boys (70 per cent) exceeded that for girls (56 per cent), both overall and within each age group category. Children aged 9 to 11 years were most likely to participate in sport. The three most popular organised sports for boys in 2008 to 2009 were soccer, swimming and Australian rules football. For girls, Swimming, netball and Gymnastics were the most popular. Encourage your child to be physically active

Parents can help their children to be physically active in a number of ways, including:

Lead by example – be physically active yourself.

Make sure that some family outings offer opportunities for physical activity, such as playing sport together.

Encourage your child to walk or ride their bicycle for short trips, rather than rely on you to drive them.

Support your child's efforts in sport. Make sure you're there at each match, cheering them on from the sidelines. Set time limits on sedentary activities like computer games and television.

Consult with your child's school on ways to encourage greater participation in sports and physical activity. Where to get help

Your child's school

Sporting clubs and associations

Your doctor, physiotherapists (with a special interest in paediatrics) or other exercise qualified professional.

Things to remember

- Only six out of 10 children aged between five and 14 years participate in sport outside of school.
- More boys (70 per cent) than girls (56 per cent) participate in sports.
- Evidence suggests that physically active children are more likely to mature into physically active adults.
- Reducing physical inactivity is just as important as increasing physical activity.
- Aim for at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day and a maximum of two hours per day using electronic media including TV.
- Parents can encourage their children to play sport in many ways, including through role modelling.