



FACTS ABOUT YOUTH SPORTS AND HEALTH

Sports programs get kids physically active — a significant step in addressing the steep rise in childhood overweight and obesity and ensuring a lifelong love of physical activity. Physical activity improves overall health, increases longevity, and protects against obesity, coronary artery disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, depression, and anxiety.¹ Exercise and sports participation can also enhance mental health and self confidence.² Yet fewer than half of young people, and only a quarter of low-income youth, participate in organized sports outside of school.

Childhood Obesity and Related Problems

- Today's children are likely to be the first generation to live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents due to obesity and other related diseases.³
- More than 15% of the nation's children between the ages of 6 and 11 are overweight, up from just 4% in the 1970s.⁴
- One-third of American children and youth are either obese or at risk of becoming obese.⁵ In California, 17.6% of children over the age of 5 are overweight.⁶
- The cumulative lifetime risk of coronary heart disease is likely greatest among those who are persistently overweight throughout their adolescent years.⁷
- Approximately 300,000 deaths a year in the US are currently associated with overweight and obesity.⁸
- Obesity-related health expenditures have accounted for an estimated 25% or more of national health care spending growth between 1987 and 2001.⁹

Inactivity

- Physical inactivity can lead to poorer health outcomes for children and adolescents.¹⁰
- The California Department of Education conducts annual fitness tests in California public schools in grades five, seven, and nine. In 2007, only 30% of students were in the healthy fitness zone on all six areas tested.¹¹

¹ Cohen, D; Taylor, S; Zonta, M; Vestal, K; and Schuster, M. "Availability of high school extracurricular sports programs and high-risk behaviors." *Journal of School Health* 77.2 (Feb 2007): 80(7).

² Girl Scout Research Institute. (2006). *The New Normal? What Girls Say About Healthy Living*.

³ Levi, J; Segal, L, and Gadola, E. (2007). *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America*. Trust for America's Health.

⁴ Davis, F. (2005). *Action plan for halting the alarming trend of childhood obesity*. Advances: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Quarterly Newsletter, 2, 1-2.

⁵ Ogden, C; Carroll, M; Curtin, L; McDowell, M; Tabak, C; and Flegal, M. (2005). *Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in the United States, 1999-2004*. JAMA; 295: 1549 - 1555.

⁶ US Department of Health and Human Services (2003). *Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance*.

⁷ Freedman, D; Kettel, L; Dietz, W; Srinivasan, S; and Berenson, G. *Relationship of Childhood Obesity to Coronary Heart Disease Risk Factors in Adulthood: The Bogalusa Heart Study*. Pediatrics 108.3 (Sept 2001): 712.

⁸ United States Department of Health and Human Services. *Overweight and Obesity: The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. Washington, DC: USDHHS; 2001

⁹ Schwarzenegger, A; Belshe, K, and Shewry, S. (2006). "California Obesity Prevention Plan: A Vision for Tomorrow, Strategic Actions for Today". California Department of Health Services.

¹⁰ Levi, J; Segal, L, and Gadola, E. (2007). *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America*. Trust for America's Health.

¹¹ California Department of Education. *2007 California Physical Fitness Test: Report to the Governor and the Legislature*. Retrieved 9/5/08 from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/pf/>



- Only about one-third of children aged 9 to 13 participate in any organized physical activity during their non-school hours. For African American, Latino, and low-income youth, rates are even lower, with about one in four participating.¹²
- In 2003, 240,000 California adolescents reported that they get no physical activity, up from 158,000 in 2001. The proportion of adolescents who are inactive also rose significantly, from 5.2% in 2001 to 7.3% in 2003.¹³
- In California, teens from low-income families and teens of color are far more likely to be physically inactive. Latino (9.5%) and African American (12.3%) adolescents are two to three times more likely to get no physical activity than white teens (4.1%).¹⁴
- Adolescents in families living below 200% of the federal poverty level are nearly twice as likely to be inactive as those in families at or above 300% of the federal poverty level.¹⁵

Positive Effects of Youth Sports on Health

- Physical activity helps control and prevent a range of health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Even small amounts of physical activity can improve health, no matter how much a person weighs or whether a person loses weight.¹⁶
- Adolescents who participate in greater levels of physical activity are less likely to smoke, or they smoke fewer cigarettes.¹⁷
- Female athletes in grades 9 through 12 are less than half as likely to get pregnant as their non-athlete peers, and they tend to have higher self-esteem and more positive body image.¹⁸
- High school athletes are less likely to use cocaine or psychedelic drugs than non-athletes.¹⁹
- Adults are more likely to be physically active during their free time if they participated in organized sports as children.²⁰

©Team-Up for Youth, 2008.

¹² Centers for Disease Control (2003). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 52 (33); 785-788.

¹³ Babey, S; Diamant, A; Brown, E, & Hastert, Theresa. (2005). "California Adolescents Increasingly Inactive". UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

¹⁴ Babey, S; Diamant, A; Brown, E, & Hastert, Theresa. (2005). "California Adolescents Increasingly Inactive". UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

¹⁵ Babey, S; Diamant, A; Brown, E, & Hastert, Theresa. (2005). "California Adolescents Increasingly Inactive". UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

¹⁶ Levi, J; Segal, L, and Gadola, E. (2007). *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America*. Trust for America's Health.

¹⁷ Rodriguez, D. and Audrain-McGovern, J. (2004). "Team Sport Participation and Smoking: Analysis with General Growth Mixture Modeling." *Journal of Pediatric Psychology* 29(4), 299-308.

¹⁸ The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2008). *Not Just Another Single Issue: Teen Pregnancy and Athletic Environment*.

¹⁹ Naylor, A.H., Gardner, D., and Zaichkowsky, L. (2001). "Drug Use Patterns Among High School Athletes and Non-Athletes." *Adolescence*, 36(144): 627-639.

²⁰ "Youth sports participation leads to active adulthood." *JOPERD--The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 75.4 (April 2004): 20(1).