



# Wellness News Network™

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## Children & Sports

Presented by: Total Health Systems

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### Introduction

Most of us were introduced to sports and physical activity at an early age, and the relationship we formed with those activities helped shape our understanding of health, fitness and quality of life. Encouraging your child to participate in sports or physical activities (either organized or informal) can have a significant and long-lasting effect on his or her physical, mental and social health. According to a 2003 study published in the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, parental support and influence are two key variables that can either optimize a child's experience of extracurricular activities or contribute to a negative experience.<sup>1</sup> In this edition of the Wellness News Network we discuss the role of sports for children and how you can help your child find the activities that are best suited for him or her.



### The Benefits of Sports for Children

Sports participation can yield significant health benefits for children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states that physical activity in children helps boost cardiorespiratory fitness and muscular strength, decreases body fatness, improves metabolic disease risk profiles, bolsters bone health and helps decrease depression and anxiety symptoms.<sup>2</sup> The possible benefits of sports participation in children goes beyond physical health to include improved mental health, as long as the sports environment surrounding your child is positive and encouraging. Your child's participation in sports and physical activity can elevate his or her self-confidence and help your child realize significant psychological benefits through continued sports participation in adolescence and adulthood.

Improved social health is another possible benefit of sports participation for children. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, sports can help children expand their social network, have fun, learn team values and boost self-esteem.<sup>3</sup> Sports participation may also teach children about the importance of fair play, how to control their impulses and how to manage success and

**QUESTION:**  
How can organized sport expand a child's social network?

- A) by having fun
- B) learning team values
- C) boosting self-esteem
- D) all of the above

**ANSWER:**  
D) all of the above

**TRUE OR FALSE:**  
Physical activity in children can help decrease depression and anxiety symptoms

**ANSWER:**  
True

**Finish this sentence....**  
Helping your child find the most appropriate physical activity means...

- A) hiding your child's cell phone
- B) knowing the interests of your child
- C) considering body type and abilities

**ANSWER:**  
B) and C)

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disappointment. Sports that bring boys and girls together in active play may be particularly beneficial in cultivating social health and they can teach girls that they are capable of excelling in physical activity while teaching boys to be welcoming, inclusive, and supportive.

## Children & Organized Sports



Organized sports are one avenue for physical activity available to children. Some children participate in organized sports to improve their skills and hone their athletic prowess, while others participate simply to be part of a team. Organized sports present an opportunity for increased physical activity and a more appropriate matching of competitors and they can help reduce your child's risk of developing common adult health problems, including obesity, diabetes and heart disease. If played for the wrong reasons, however, organized sports can be humiliating for some children and have lasting effects on a child's self-esteem.

Dr. John Douillard, a chiropractor and author of *Body, Mind and Sport*, notes that almost 50 percent of Americans experience their first major failure in life as a sports failure and he suggests

that the motivation for sports participation needs to shift from being goal-oriented to being process-oriented.<sup>4</sup> This means that a greater emphasis should be placed on how the sport is played and experienced by children, instead of what children accomplish on the playing field. Emphasizing how the sport is played and the acquisition of skills, rather than winning at all costs, is a constructive way to help your child experience joy and success in sports and keep them interested in sports and physical activity.

## Aptitudes & Activity Selection

The health benefits of sports are best realized when the circumstances of participation match your child's interests and aptitudes. If your child is playing a sport or performing a physical activity that celebrates his or her talents and abilities, he or she will be more likely to experience a greater quality of life, personal growth, and success (in whatever way he or she defines it). Helping your child find the physical activities that are most appropriate for him or her involves understanding his or her interests as well as his or her body type and physical constitution (and how these factors affect athletic ability and the enjoyment of certain sports). In his book, Douillard discusses how a person's physical constitution or makeup can predispose that individual to optimal functioning in certain activities.

Your chiropractor is an important part of your child's healthcare team and can keep your child healthy and active through regular checkups. Your chiropractor can also provide advice on activities that are most beneficial for your child's spine and general health.

## Quote to Inspire

*"Just play. Have fun.  
Enjoy the game"*

*Michael Jordan*

## References and Sources:

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