

BENEFITS OF YOUTH SPORTS

A lot of research has examined the impact of sports on physical and psychosocial health in children and adolescents. Overall the research has shown youth sport participants have higher levels of physical activity that positively influence physical and psychological health in adolescence and later in life.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Youth athletes have:

- Higher levels of physical activity and they expend more energy daily
- Less body fat
- A reduced risk of becoming overweight or obese
- Higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness
- Stronger bones and muscles
- An increased likelihood of being physically active later in life

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Youth athletes have:

- Higher levels of self-esteem and social connectedness
- Lower levels of depression
- Lower levels of suicidal ideation, thoughts, and attempts
- Lower levels of problem behaviors (aggression problems, social problems, and delinquency problems)

SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Sports can provide:

- Opportunities to make new friends
- Exposure to positive role models
- Opportunities to travel

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Middle and high school athletes have higher grade point averages than nonathletes
- Grade point average increases as the number of sports teams participated on increases
- High school sports participation is associated with higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates
- Youth athletes miss less school and are more likely to attend college

HEALTH BEHAVIORS

Sports participation has also been shown to be associated with positive health behaviors. Youth athletes report:

- Consuming more fruits and vegetables
- Being less likely to smoke cigarettes
- Watching less television
- Being more satisfied with their weight



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/>