

# Young teens who play sports feel healthier and happier about life

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Taking part in sports is good all round for young teens: physically, socially, and mentally, according to a new study<sup>1</sup> by Dr. Keith Zullig and Rebecca White from West Virginia University in the US. Their research shows that middle-school teenagers who are physically active and play on sports teams are more satisfied with their life and feel healthier. Zullig and White's paper is published online in Springer's journal *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.

Although the benefits of physical activity are well documented among teenagers, middle school children are an understudied population in adolescent physical activity research. The authors explored the relationship between physical activity (including sports participation), life satisfaction and self-rated health concurrently, for the first time, among 245 middle school students in grades 7 and 8. The 12- to 14-year-old boys and girls were asked to fill in questionnaires assessing their [physical activity](#) levels, their overall satisfaction with life and asking them to describe their own health.

In boys, participation in [vigorous activity](#) had no effect on either life satisfaction or self-rated health. In girls, those who had taken part in vigorous activity in the last week were significantly more satisfied with their life compared to girls who had not, but participation in vigorous activity had no effect on their self-rated health.

Playing on a sports team was linked to higher life satisfaction in both boys and girls. In addition, boys were five times more likely, and girls 30

times more likely, to describe their health as fair/poor when they were not playing on a sports team.

The authors conclude: "Our study demonstrates the benefits of youth sports participation on self-rated health and [life satisfaction](#) among young youth at a critical juncture in [adolescent development](#). Our findings suggest that [sports](#) team participation may enhance school connectedness, social support and bonding among friends and teammates."

**More information:** Zullig KJ & White RJ (2010). Physical activity, life satisfaction, and self-rated health of middle school students. Applied Research in Quality of Life; [DOI:10.1007/s11482-010-9129-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-010-9129-z)

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