

Youth with IBD are less fit than their peers: study

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Children and adolescents growing up with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) are less fit than their peers, says a study by researchers at McMaster University and the McMaster Children's Hospital.

The study, published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* online, shows children and youth with the most common forms of inflammatory bowel disease have [aerobic fitness](#) levels 25 per cent lower than other children their age, and their [muscle function](#) is 10 per cent lower.

"Raising a child with a chronic condition is challenging, but we need to look at more than just 'fixing the child' and think about active living to reduce the risk of future [health problems](#)," said principal investigator Brian Timmons of the [Child Health](#) and Exercise Medicine Program at the university and hospital.

The study showed that patients with inflammatory bowel disease in remission also have poor fitness that may start at an early age.

Fitness during childhood is an important predictor of adult health, said Timmons. "Closer attention needs to be paid to the physical activity levels and participation habits of youth with IBD. This starts with the child's doctor."

Investigators at the Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program and the Centre for Child and Youth Digestive Health teamed up to measure aerobic fitness and muscle function in patients with either Crohn's

disease and ulcerative colitis, the most common forms of inflammatory bowel disease, while they were in remission. The prevalence of [inflammatory bowel disease](#) among Canadian youth is between 18 and 70 per 100,000, depending on the province.

Timmons said the study confirms that patients should be encouraged to be as active as possible and families should be provided resources about active living. Clinicians who specialize in pediatric IBD should consider referring patients with IBD for exercise testing and involvement of an activity therapist or physiotherapist in the clinical management of these youth.

He said there are no specific recommended activities, but "patients are likely to benefit from a variety of activities and sports that they find enjoyable and fun."

The study will be published in print later this spring.

Provided by McMaster University

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