

One path to fitter kids: More P.E. at school

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Study finds that reinstating daily classes would fulfill 1/3rd of U.S. goals for kids' exercise.

(HealthDay News) —Remember the physical education component of children's education? Many schools have cut back on P.E. classes, but a new study finds that might be a mistake.

Researchers report that daily physical education classes would go a long way in helping children meet U.S. recommendations for [physical activity](#).

The study, funded by the nonprofit Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that attending a P.E. class every day would increase kids' daily physical activity by about 23 minutes.

That might not seem like a big increase, but it would fulfill more than

one-third of the total daily amount of exercise recommended by experts, the researchers said.

"This study shows that policy-makers have a lot of tools at their disposal to help kids be active," study lead author David Bassett, professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, said in a foundation news release. "But it also shows that no change alone will be enough. Helping young people reach activity goals will require a combination of strategies."

The U.S. government's [Physical Activity Guidelines](#) for Americans issued in 2008 recommend that young people be active for at least 60 minutes every day. Research published that year showed, however, only 42 percent of children between 6 and 11 years old and just 8 percent of teens met that requirement.

The researchers examined 85 studies that used objective assessments of physical activity to project how certain policy changes would affect the amount of exercise children get each day.

A total of nine different types of requirements in both schools and the community were analyzed. The researchers then estimated how many minutes of physical activity each policy would add to a child's day.

Among their findings:

- A daily P.E. requirement: 23 minutes
- Offering classroom physical activity breaks: 19 minutes
- Increasing walking or biking to school: 16 minutes
- Renovating and installing new equipment in parks: 12 minutes
- Adding after-school physical activity programs: 10 minutes
- Boosting access to parks: 1 minute

The study authors pointed out that combining the daily P.E. requirement,

short activity breaks during school hours and active commuting to school would add up to 58 minutes of [exercise](#) for children.

The study was published in the February issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

More information: The American Heart Association provides more information on [children and physical activity](#).

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