

Girls with poorer motor skills more likely than boys to be obese

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Young girls who exhibit a poor mastery of fundamental movement skills (FMS) are more likely to be obese than boys who have similarly low skills, according to research led by Coventry University.

The study - which won an award at the recent British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences conference - assessed among other things the running, catching, and balance skills of 250 girls and [boys](#) between 6-11 years, categorising their FMS as either low, medium or high.

Researchers at Coventry University, working in collaboration with Middlesex University and the University of South Carolina, then cross-referenced the kids' motor skills with their [body fatness](#) to investigate the relationship between the two. The children's habitual physical activity was also taken into account.

The researchers found that:

- body fatness was significantly higher among girls in the low FMS category compared with boys in the same category;
- body fatness was higher for girls in the low FMS category compared with girls with medium or high fundamental movement skills;
- there was no significant difference in body fatness across the low, medium and high FMS categories for boys.

Lead researcher Professor Mike Duncan, an exercise physiologist in

Coventry University's Centre for Applied Biological and Exercise Sciences, said:

"We know from previous studies that primary school children with a higher body mass index are likely to have poorer fundamental [movement skills](#), but our research is aiming to understand this relationship in more detail - particularly how gender may play a role.

"What we've found is significant because it signals a need to review the strategies we have to enhance motor proficiency in girls, and means we should be engaging health practitioners and PE teachers to help explore and understand how additional opportunities or different techniques may be required compared with boys.

"The next big question - which we're continuing to research - is whether developmental delays in acquiring these [motor skills](#), whether in [girls](#) or boys, may actually be the cause of children gaining unhealthy weight status."

Provided by Coventry University

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