

Physical activity should be a vital sign of children's overall health

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More than half of U.S. children are not getting the recommended amount of weekly physical activity. And most of those who do meet the recommendations are exercising longer and for fewer days, risking burnout or repetitive injury risk.

The study abstract, "Evaluation of Pediatric Exercise 'Vital Sign' in Electronic Medical Record from Sports Medicine Clinic", will be presented on Saturday, Nov. 3 at the American Academy of Pediatrics 2018 National Conference and Exhibition in Orlando.

The study examined self-reported physical activity of 7,822 children over a three-year period. The children were seen at outpatient pediatric [sports medicine](#) clinics. Data indicates that only 5.2 percent of children reported meeting the daily goals for physical activity. In addition, 49.6 percent were insufficiently active, and 5 percent were reported no physical activity. The categories were based on the number of minutes per week in which children participated in physical activity based on the recommended 60 minutes per day or 420 minutes of activity per week.

"Exercise should be used as a vital sign of health," said abstract presenter Julie Young, MA, ATC, a research assistant in the Division of Pediatric Sports Medicine, Nationwide Children's Hospital. "There are numerous advantages of physical activity. Asking these questions can open the door for clinicians to have important conversations with families on how to ensure children get these benefits."

In the study, males averaged 61 more minutes of physical activity per week than females. Males were also 39 percent more likely than females to meet the current physical activity guidelines of 420 minutes per week.

Researchers also noted that physical activity increased with age, with younger children reporting less exercise. Early childhood physical activity is vital to develop motor skills and physical literacy, which can impact physical activity behaviors throughout life.

"Opportunities for physical activity are shrinking—less free play and decreased physical education in schools," said Amy Valasek, MD, MS, physician for Nationwide Children's Hospital Sports Medicine and assistant professor in the department of pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine "But by asking simple questions about daily activity, clinicians can counsel and provide an exercise prescription for healthy [physical activity](#)."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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