

Clumsy kids can be fit, too

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New study clearly demonstrates that aerobic fitness is not linked to motor skills.
Credit: University of Jyväskylä

Clumsy kids can be as aerobically fit as their peers with better motor skills, a new Finnish study shows. The results are based on research conducted at the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä and the Institute of Biomedicine of the University of

Eastern Finland, and they were published in Translational Sports Medicine.

Aerobic fitness doesn't go hand in hand with motor skills

According to the general perception, fit kids also have good [motor skills](#), while low aerobic [fitness](#) has been thought to be a link between poor motor skills and overweight. This perception is based on studies whose methods do not distinguish between the roles of aerobic fitness and body fat content as [risk factors](#) for poor motor skills and overweight. "Our study clearly demonstrated that aerobic fitness is not linked to motor skills when body composition is properly taken into account," explains Eero Haapala, Ph.D., from the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences at the University of Jyväskylä. "Also, aerobic fitness was not strongly associated with overweight or obesity. Therefore, it seems that the role of poor aerobic fitness as a risk factor for poor motor skills and excess body weight has been strongly exaggerated."

The development of motor skills can be supported

This study did not look at the role of exercise in the development of motor skills, but earlier studies have shown that a range of exercise, varying in motor challenges and intensity, contributes to the development of motor skills, regardless of aerobic fitness and body fat content. Higher levels of physical activity and less sedentary behavior can also protect against the development of excess weight.

"The key message of our study is that even a child who is unfit can be motorically adept and the heart of a clumsier kid can be as fit as her or his more skilful peer," Haapala says. "In addition, high levels of varied physical activity and reduced sedentary behavior are central to the

development of motor skills and the prevention of excess weight gain since childhood."

The study investigated the associations between aerobic fitness, body fat content, and motor skills in 332 children aged seven to 11 years. Aerobic fitness was measured by maximum bicycle ergometer test and body composition with bioimpedance and DXA devices. Motor skills were measured by common methods.

More information: Eero A. Haapala et al. Associations between cardiorespiratory fitness, motor competence, and adiposity in children, *Translational Sports Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/tsm2.198](https://doi.org/10.1002/tsm2.198)

Provided by University of Jyväskylä

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