

Only 9% of teens meet physical activity guidelines during the pandemic, down from 16% pre-pandemic

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This New Year's Day, parents might want to resolve to get more exercise—and bring their teenage children along. A new national study

finds that only 9% of teens met the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day during the pandemic—a decline from 16% pre-pandemic.

"The pandemic led to the cancelation of in-person [physical education classes](#) and organized sports, gym and recreational facility closures, and rises in screen use, which all contributed to lower [physical activity](#) for teens," said lead author Jason Nagata, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco.

The study found that lower physical activity was linked to poorer mental health, greater stress, and more worry about the pandemic.

"Physical activity can support [young people](#)'s physical and mental health," said Nagata. "We found that teens who were more active during the pandemic reported stronger emotional wellbeing and felt more socially connected to others."

On average, teens reported two hours of physical activity per week during the pandemic. These estimates were lower for teens of color—Black, Latino, and Native American teens reported an average of 90 minutes of physical activity per week.

"We noted important racial and socioeconomic disparities in physical activity which may reflect unequal access to safe, outdoor recreational spaces," said co-author Kyle T. Ganson, Ph.D., assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

"Parents should encourage their children to move more and sit less," said Nagata. "Despite disruptions from the pandemic, consider doing activities as a family, going outdoors, or participating in virtual exercise classes."

The research was published in *Preventive Medicine Reports*.

More information: Jason M. Nagata et al, Moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity among adolescents in the USA during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Preventive Medicine Reports* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2021.101685](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2021.101685)

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