

[IMAGE]

## Physical Education Gets an 'F'

With obesity and diabetes rates in American children on the rise, parents are more concerned than ever about their children's fitness levels. Poor habits in children can lead to the development of chronic diseases in adulthood; children active in sports or other physical activities are also less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Current recommendations are for children to perform at least an hour of physical activity every day, and that at least 50% of physical education (PE) classes consist of moderate-to-vigorous activity.

To evaluate the activity levels of third-graders in PE classes, more than 800 kids from a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds at hundreds of elementary schools across the U.S. were individually observed for one day. Researchers recorded the amount of PE class time children spent sitting, standing, walking, performing vigorous exercise, etc., and how many PE classes the school mandated children take each week.

On average, the 9-year-olds only took two PE classes per week, instead of the recommended five; only 6% of these children had PE every weekday. While in PE class, the third-graders averaged merely five minutes of vigorous activity and 12 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per session (25 minutes per week) - far short of the recommended levels.

Make sure your child isn't sitting through physical education hour. If he or she is not getting enough exercise at school, encourage physical activities at home. Learning sports and being active at a young age allows kids to develop coordination, muscle and skeletal strength, and good life habits, and best of all - to have fun!

### *Reference:*

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development Network. Frequency and intensity of activity of third-grade children in physical education. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 2003;157(2), pp. 185-190.

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