

[IMAGE]

## Playing Sports, Staying Healthy

Organized athletics are woven into the fabric of the American tradition. Millions of boys and girls participate in baseball, basketball, track and field, and other sports as part of club and/or school teams. In addition to its established health benefits, sports participation has been lauded for fostering such basic values as fair play, competitiveness and achievement.

It has also been hypothesized that because team rules and guidelines often promote proper nutrition and the avoidance of unhealthy behaviors, sports participation in youth may contribute to an overall healthy lifestyle. A study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* examined this hypothesis using data from the 1997 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey. More than 14,000 U.S. high-school students were asked about sports participation and about experiences with various health-risk behaviors, including poor diet, tobacco use, alcohol and illegal drug use; sexual activity; violence; and weight-loss practices.

Results showed that approximately 62% of U.S. students (70% of male students, 53% of female students) participated on one or more sports teams in school or nonschool settings. With few exceptions, these students also reported less risky health behaviors than nonparticipants, including better diet (higher consumption of fruit and vegetables) and lower incidence of cigarette smoking, illegal drug use, and sexual intercourse in the previous three months. The authors make their findings clear, concluding: "Sports participation is common among U.S. high-school students and is associated with numerous positive health benefits and few negative health behaviors."

Encourage your children to participate in athletics as part of a healthy lifestyle. For more information on the many benefits of exercise and fitness, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/sports.html>

### *Reference:*

Pate RR, Trost SG, Levin S, et al. Sports participation and health-related behaviors among U.S. youth. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, Sept. 2000: Vol. 154, pp904-11.

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