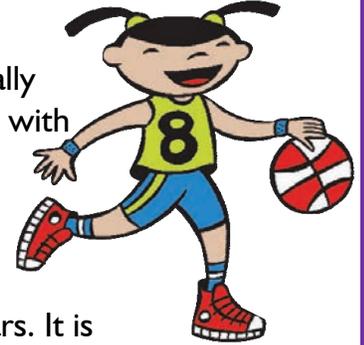


# Teenage Girls & Physical Activity

Physical activity is important for everybody, including teenagers, but especially for girls who are generally less active than boys the same age. As teens deal with the transition from primary school to high school there are other pressures that come with this transition—socially, at home, and at school.



Issues such as body image, the onset of menstruation, and general feelings of insecurity about their changing bodies can rise to the surface in these years. It is important to remind teenage girls about the rewards of physical activity while being mindful of the barriers they may be dealing with in their lives.

## Some Rewards of Physical Activity for Teenage Girls:

- Increased strength, stamina and flexibility.
- Gain in a healthy body image and increased self-esteem.
- Helps keep the blues away and is a great way to de-stress.
- It's a fun way to spend time with your friends and family — come up with some group activities centered around physical activity!

## Some common barriers to teenage girls starting and/or continuing a physical activity routine.

- Physical *inactivity* role-modeled by parents.
- Lack of energy due to lack of physical fitness.
- Peer role-modeling: i.e. having friends who don't play sports or exercise regularly.
- Lack of skills, coupled with fear of looking silly or clumsy and being teased.
- Embarrassment around wearing work-out clothes.

## Some ways you can build a physical activity program that successfully includes and welcomes teenage girls:

- Hold “girls only” physical activities e.g. yoga hour, time on the basketball court, dance contests, etc.
- Organize clubs for girls that include physical activity and/or healthy eating components e.g. hula hoops, vegetarian cooking, ethnic food, croquet, dancing, lawn bowling, etc.



-Adapted from Fact Sheet created by Kinect Australia

For more information visit us at <https://5210.psu.edu> or email at [5210@psu.edu](mailto:5210@psu.edu).

## References

Iannotti, R. J., & Wang, J. (2013). Trends in physical activity, sedentary behavior, diet, and BMI among US adolescents, 2001-2009. *Pediatrics*, *132*(4), 606-614.

Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M., Hannan, P. J., & Rex, J. (2003). New moves: A school-based obesity prevention program for adolescent girls. *Preventive Medicine*, *37*(1), 41-51.

O'Dea, J. A. (2003). Why do kids eat healthful food? Perceived benefits of and barriers to healthful eating and physical activity among children and adolescents. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, *103*(4), 497-501.

Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/default.aspx>

Whitehead, S., & Biddle, S. (2008). Adolescent girls' perceptions of physical activity: A focus group study. *European Physical Education Review*, *14*(2), 243-262.

For more information visit us at <https://5210.psu.edu> or email at [5210@psu.edu](mailto:5210@psu.edu).