

## **Why Should Children Play Sports?**

Last Updated: Aug 12, 2013 | By Amanda Davis

Participation in sports is beneficial for children and adults alike.

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Sports, whether team-based or individual, are a great activity for children that provide a variety of benefits other than physical activity. Participation in sports can help build self-esteem and confidence, can motivate children to excel academically and can help build social skills.

Participation also can teach children the benefits of goal-setting and practice.

### Physical Activity

Physical activity is the most obvious benefit of sports participation. Children often spend too much time watching television or playing video games. But sports practices and games provide an opportunity for exercise that can help keep kids in shape and healthy.

### Social Skills

Sports participation can help children develop social skills that will benefit them throughout their entire lives. They learn to interact not only with other children their age, but also with older individuals in their coaches and sports officials. Kids learn leadership skills, team-building skills and communication skills that will help them in school, their future career and personal relationships.

Participation in sports can have a huge positive impact on a child's self-esteem and confidence. Children who participate in sports get praise and encouragement from coaches and parents, which helps to build self-confidence. They also learn to trust in their own abilities and push themselves. Constructive criticism is also a major part of sports participation, and young athletes learn to accept such criticism and use it to their benefit. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry suggests that parents be actively involved to ensure that children get the most out of sports participation.

### Academic Success

It is no surprise that children who participate in athletics excel in academics as well. They can apply the same principles of dedication and hard work learned through sports participation to their studies. According to an article published on the website America, playing on a high school sports team increases a young woman's chances of graduating from college by 41 percent.

### Lifelong Health

Sports participation promotes health and wellness not only through childhood but throughout a child's lifetime. "Lifetime" sports such as swimming and golf are especially beneficial because the child can continue to play as an adult, benefiting from the physical activity. Children who participate in sports might also be more aware of healthy food choices. Although sports participation is an excellent avenue to promote health and wellness, parents and coaches must encourage healthy living and be positive role models as well.

- See more at: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/160825-why-should-children-play-sports/#sthash.La21yhQb.dpuf>