Teenagers Are Too Sedentary

Josephine Marcotty

A 2008 study of adolescents in cities across the United States showed that there is a dramatic drop in the level of physical activity around age thirteen for girls and fourteen and a half for boys. In this viewpoint Josephine Marcotty, a reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, discusses this study. She notes that most of the teens who remain active are members of competitive sports teams. Experts recommend that a larger variety of athletic opportunities should be offered for teens who are not involved with team sports.

New research is charting the roots of the nation’s obesity epidemic: Between the ages of 9 and 15, kids’ daily physical activity drops from an average of three hours to less than one.

On weekends it’s worse. Fifteen-year-olds, on average, move around only 35 minutes a day on Saturdays and Sundays, according to a study of 1,000 kids across the country. The results, published today [July 16, 2008] in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), put physicians on notice that they need to pay more attention to whether their young patients are spending too much time online and on their cell phones, and not enough at the pool or park.

Josephine Marcotty, “Active at 9, but Sedentary at 15: Obesity Study Finds That by Age 15, U.S. Kids, on Average, Are Getting Only 35 Minutes of Exercise on Weekdays,” Star Tribune, July 16, 2008. Copyright © 2008 by the Star Tribune. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.
“There is a lot of pressure on physicians to start addressing this,” said Dan Halvorsen, an expert in pediatric exercise physiology at the University of Minnesota.

It is the latest in a year of alarming news about childhood obesity and the diseases that come with it. Nearly a third of the nation’s kids are too heavy and increasingly sedentary. Just last week [July 9780737762938_ITCY.indd   9
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Children’s activity levels drop off from three to just one hour a day between the ages of nine and fifteen, according to a study cited by the author.