Parents significantly underestimate how long children should be active for each day, new research finds

Monday 24 April, 2023

- Almost half of all parents (48%) believe children aged 5-18 should only be active for 30 minutes or less a day

- Just 43% believe children should be active for at least 60 minutes every day
- 97% of teachers agree play and sport can support mental wellbeing
- Charity the Youth Sport Trust launches National School Sports Week powered by Sports Direct, to raise awareness and get children 'playing for fun, playing for 60' this June

The UK Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends that children aged 5 to 18 should be highly active (with an elevated heart rate) for an average of at least 60 minutes a day, across the week in order to stay happy and healthy.

However, new research by YouGov commissioned by children's charity the Youth Sport Trust reveals parents are more likely to believe that children only need to be active for 30 minutes a day, less than half of the recommended guidance.

The Youth Sport Trust thinks that low awareness of the recommendation is contributing to low activity levels amongst children.

Less than half of all young people in the UK (47%) are active for 60 minutes each day, with almost a third (30%) averaging fewer than 30 active minutes. (Sport England Active Lives Children and Young People Survey 2021-22).

These findings are set against a backdrop of a wellbeing crisis among young people in the UK. Further research by Teacher Tapp commissioned by the Youth Sport Trust found 97% of teachers are 'concerned' about the mental health of young people in their school.

And whilst the same number of teachers (97%) agree sports and play can support mental health, only 35% of teachers are aware children should be active for 60 or more minutes a day, highlighting the need for more support and training for schools and teachers.

In a bid to drive up awareness of the Chief Medical Officers' guidance, the charity is this week launching its annual National School Sports Week campaign, powered by Sports Direct, to get more children 'playing for fun, playing for 60' between 19 and 25 June.

The campaign will work with families, schools and across society to ensure that people are better informed about the benefits of sport and play for their children.

National School Sports Week is aiming to boost children's activity levels by encouraging people and organisations to make a #PledgeToPlay for 60 minutes every day during this week.

Last year, schools taking part in National School Sports Week provided more than 650,000 young people with opportunities to be involved in PE, play and sport.

Here today we have the Chief Executive of the Youth Sport Trust, Alison Oliver MBE, to tell us more about the importance of driving awareness, talk around the physical and mental benefits of the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines and top tips to get kids up and out this June.

SPOKESPERSON COMMENTARY

Alison Oliver MBE, Chief Executive of the Youth Sport Trust says: "We know children are leading increasingly sedentary lives. Screen time is up, and time spent in nature is down – it's no surprise that parents and teachers are increasingly concerned about children's physical activity levels and the consequence of this in the classroom.

"Children's formative years can influence their wellbeing, development, education outcomes and physical activity levels well into adulthood. There is a compelling evidence base for more play and sport in children's lives. Pockets of innovative practice which are unlocking new ways to inspire young people

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to get active are emerging, but a priority has to be raising public awareness of the CMO guidance should be a priority alongside action to help schools and families respond.

“National School Sports Week is a great opportunity for us to engage with schools and families. We’re excited to share some brilliant ideas and guidance as well as uniting a movement of organisations to help amplify why this is important and what’s available at a local level. We are inviting the nation to #PledgeToPlay.

“Today we issue a rallying call. Daily physical activity, play and the development of physical literacy through physical education and school sport should be an integral part of every childhood, and we are really excited to work with Sports Direct to make play and sport more accessible for more young people and in turn help them lead happier and healthier lives.”

Schools, families and organisations can start to take action by supporting the Youth Sport Trust’s National School Sports Week campaign at https://www.youthsporttrust.org/join-us/nssw

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the research:

YouGov Plc - Total sample size was 2,310 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd - 24th March 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Filter applied: parents of children aged 18 and under (566 sample). Teacher Tapp Survey - Sample 8,000+ teachers (weighted), Questions served 4th & 5th April.

Chief Medical Officers’ physical activity guidelines for children and young people

The UK Chief Medical Officer recommends that children and young people need to do two types of physical activity each week:

- aerobic exercise
- exercises to strengthen their muscles and bones

Children and young people aged 5 to 18 should:

- aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity a day across the week

- take part in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscles and bones
- reduce the time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity. Aim to spread activity throughout the day

Read more about the guidelines on the NHS website here;

Powered by Sports Direct Sports Slam

This year, National School Sports Week is sponsored by Sports Direct and will see the return of Sports Slam – Sports Direct and the Youth Sport Trust’s initiative which encourages 7–11-year-olds to participate in at least 60 minutes of activity or sport each day. Sports Slam 2023 will include a week-long programme of fun-fuelled activities and challenges, that will inspire kids to get active, while helping them develop skills that go beyond court, field and track. During the week, Sports Slam will enlist the support of some of the country’s most exciting and revered athletes to tour schools across the UK, engaging with the nation’s next generation of sports stars

Sports Slam features 5 different sports across 5 days full of fun physical activity and active learning lesson plans. PLUS 2,300 lucky schools will win a bumper Sports Slam equipment pack full of sporty goodies to restock and revamp their PE department. Schools can register for Sports Slam today at sportstartshere.com/events/sports-slam

About the Youth Sport Trust:

We would be happy to arrange broadcast opportunities in schools to speak to the findings.

The Youth Sport Trust is a UK leading children's charity for improving young people's wellbeing through sport and play. It empowers young people and equips educators to transform lives. Founded in 1995, it works with around 20,000 schools and inspires Changemakers to build a sense of belonging. Its vision is to create a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits of play and sport. Visit the YST website for ideas, tips and information www.youthsporttrust.org. **For press enquiries and requests for interviews, please contact Isabel Turner in the press office on 07825065195 or isabel.turner@youthsporttrust.org**

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