

FitFacts®

Teens, Fitness and You

STATISTICS SHOW THAT SUICIDE, PREGNANCY AND FIREARM-HOMICIDE ARE ALL ON THE RISE FOR TEENS. IN 2007, THE CDC REPORTED THAT 23% OF TEENS SMOKE, AND 17% OF EIGHTH GRADERS HAVE TRIED ALCOHOL. ONLY 30% OF THEM GET ENOUGH EXERCISE, WHICH MEANS THE OTHER 70% ARE SETTING THEMSELVES UP FOR A SEDENTARY LIFE. KIDS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE ARE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE THESE PROBLEMS; HOWEVER, GETTING TEENS TO EXERCISE IS NO EASY TASK.



QUALITY TIME, QUALITY TALK

It's impossible to have good relationships with teenagers if you don't spend time with them. Don't expect teens to automatically think you're cool and trustworthy—you'll have to prove it. Accept them as they are, and show genuine concern for them. Learn their language so you can relate to what they have to say. A good listener has a better chance of developing relationships with teens, since most of them would rather talk than listen. Offer your words of wisdom only when necessary.

THEY'RE LISTENING—WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Be a good role model by showing them that being active can be fun, and they will follow your example. Explain that physical activity is more than exercise classes or team sports – hiking, camping, body surfing and playing Frisbee™ are activities the whole family can enjoy. Teens will be having so much fun, they may not realize that what they're doing is actually good for them.

Teenagers can participate in almost any fitness activity, including weight training, mountain biking or martial arts. Many gyms offer discounts to reach the younger market. Organized sports also improve socialization and develop discipline and teamwork skills.

COMPETING WITH THE NEGATIVE

It's difficult to get your message of good health and fitness across when you're competing with television and video games. Try appealing to a teenager's sense of fun and need for social interaction. Whenever possible, include their friends in your fitness activities.

At some point, encouragement may become counterproductive. Instead, continue to model an active lifestyle and perhaps one day he or she will follow your lead. To get anyone to exercise, teenager or not, it has to be fun. Teenagers aren't likely to do something just because they're told it's good for them. But with your support and encouragement, you can help put them on a path to better health that lasts a lifetime.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Ornelas, I.J., Perreira, K.M., & Ayala, G.X. (2007). Parental influences on adolescent physical activity: A longitudinal study. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 4, 3.