

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL—Pinellas County

Physical Activity—Team Sports

Organized sports and activities can offer a variety of positive experiences for your child. It's a great way to learn about teamwork, dedication and fairness while having fun and getting exercise. It's also a way to make friends, develop skills and become more active and healthier. It's important to find the right sport or activity for your child so that it leads to a positive experience.



There are several questions you should ask before you enroll your child in any organized sport or activity.

Is your child interested?

Ask your child what activity he or she would like to participate in. Some kids are more interested in playing a team sport, like soccer or baseball, and some would rather be involved in more individual sports, such as martial arts, dance or swimming. Make sure involvement is your child's choice, not your demand.

Is your child physically ready?

Some sports are more physically demanding than others, and some have more physical contact with other children than others. Would the sport be too demanding for your child until he or she is a little older? Is your child socially, mentally and physically ready?

What sport will work for you?

How much will it cost to be involved in the sport? Where is it located? What equipment will be involved? As the parent of a young child, you must also be committed to paying fees, getting your child to practice and supplying the uniform or other equipment. Make sure your child is involved in a sport that you can also commit to supporting.

Is the sport child-oriented and fun?

Remember that the point of involving children in organized sports is to have fun, make friends, improve self-esteem, learn teamwork and to learn new skills. If the coach or instructor is too demanding or competitive, it may not be the right match. If your child is losing self-confidence rather than gaining, feeling pressured, hates going to practice or is embarrassed, it may be doing more harm than good. It may be that the particular sport, team, coach or game is not right for your child. There are plenty of ways for children to excel and become involved in physical activity. Don't let a bad experience make your child feel like a failure.



Why Some Kids Don't Like Teams

Every child doesn't have to join a team, and with enough other activities, kids can be fit without them. But it's a good idea to find out why your child isn't interested in being on a team. You might be able to help solve any concerns your child might have, or steer your child toward something else. Talk with your child and let him or her know that you'd like to work on a solution together. That solution might mean making changes and sticking with the team sport or finding a new activity to try.

Here are some reasons why sports might be a turnoff for a child:

Still Developing Basic Skills

Though many sports programs are available for preschoolers, it's not until about age 6 or 7 that most kids have the physical skills, the attention span and the ability to grasp the rules needed to play organized sports. If your child hasn't had much practice in a specific sport, it may take a while for him or her to be expected to reliably perform necessary skills such as kicking a soccer ball on the run or hitting a baseball thrown from the pitcher's mound. Trying and failing, especially in a game situation, might frustrate your child and make him or her nervous.

Coach or League Is Too Competitive

A kid who's already a reluctant athlete might feel extra-nervous when the coach barks out orders or the league focuses heavily on winning. Remember, coaches are human, too, and some can be insensitive to the needs of a child. You can try talking to the coach, but sometimes the only solution is to find a new team or a new type of team. Some teams are noncompetitive and focus on the kids just having fun.

Stage Fright

If your child isn't a natural athlete, or is a little shy, he or she might be uncomfortable with the pressure of being on a team. More self-conscious kids also might worry about letting their parents, coaches or teammates down. This is especially true if the child is still working on basic skills and if the league is very competitive.

Other Barriers

Different kids mature at different rates, so it's common for there to be a wide range of heights, weights and athletic abilities even among kids of the same age group. So if your child is much bigger or smaller than other kids of the same age - or less coordinated or not as strong - he or she may feel self-conscious and uncomfortable competing with them. Your child also may be afraid of getting injured or worried that he or she can't keep up. A child who is overweight might be reluctant to participate in a sport, for example, while a child who has asthma might feel more comfortable with sports that require short outputs of energy, like baseball, football, gymnastics, downhill skiing and shorter track and field events.

<http://www.childwellbeing.org>



Individual Activities

- swimming
- horseback riding
- dance classes
- cycling
- skateboarding
- hiking
- golf
- gymnastics
- martial arts
- yoga
- running

4FITKIDS is a Non-competitive youth sport league, in St. Petersburg where the focus is truly on kids. The kids get active, stay active and learn to love to play.



For more information go to www.fourfitkids.com or call (727) 637-6838

Support Your Kid's Choices

Even if the going's tough, work with your child to find something active that he or she likes. Try to remain open-minded. Maybe your child is interested in an activity that is not offered at his or her school. If your daughter wants to try flag football or ice hockey, for example, help her find a local league or talk to school officials about starting up a new team. You'll need to be patient if your child has difficulty choosing and sticking to an activity. It often takes several tries before a child finds one that feels like the right fit. But when something clicks, you'll be glad you invested the time and effort. For your child, it's one big step toward developing active habits that can last a lifetime.



Funding for this newsletter was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 03135 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government.

For information about **Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County** visit our website: www.StepsFL.com or call 2-1-1 (Pinellas County cell phone users must call 727-210-4211)