

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG VIRGINIA MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

RESULTS FROM THE VIRGINIA YOUTH SURVEY – 2015

INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents should participate in a daily minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity.¹ Physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles. It helps reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases, reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, and promotes psychological well being.² The relationship between physical activity, health, and academic performance is well documented; physical activity can help students improve academic performance through factors such as increased concentration and attentiveness in the classroom.² Excessive screen-time behaviors, such as using a computer and watching TV, for more than 2 hours daily have been linked to elevated blood pressure, elevated serum cholesterol, and being overweight or obese.³ Comprehensive school-based physical activity programs can help youth meet most of their physical activity needs.¹ The CDC recommends schools provide daily physical education for students in kindergarten through grade 12, and at least 20 minutes of recess in addition to physical education.¹

RESPONDENTS

A total of 2246 Virginia middle school students took the survey, most of whom (90%) were between the ages of 11 and 13 years old. Males (51%) and females (49%), as well as student grade levels were evenly distributed.

SUMMARY

Physical Activity Recommendations

- Eight percent of students did not meet the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity on any of the previous 7 days.
- Thirty-three percent of students met the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity on all of the 7 previous days.
- At each grade level, males were more likely than females to meet the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity on all of the previous 7 days (**fig.1**).

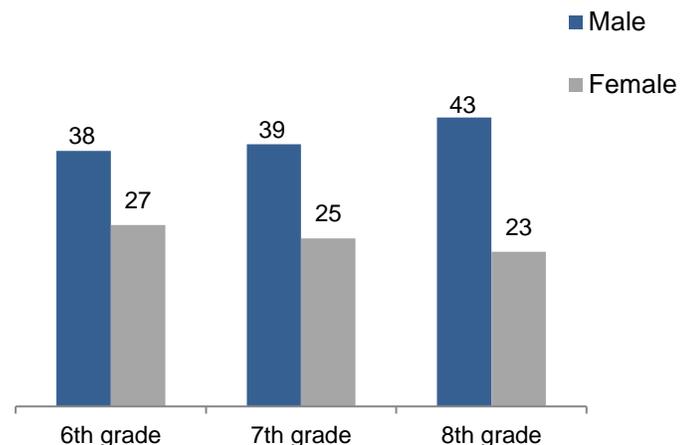


Figure 1: Percentage of students who were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on all of the previous 7 days, by grade and sex.

- In Virginia middle schools, participation in sports teams was associated with an increase in physical activity.

Physical Activity Recommendations, cont'd.

- Students who were not physically active at least 60 minutes per day on any of the previous 7 days were more likely to have ever felt sad, hopeless, or anxious (1.1 times as likely)
- Students who were not physically active at least 60 minutes per day on any of the previous 7 days were more likely to perceive themselves as slightly or very overweight (1.9 times as likely) (fig. 2).

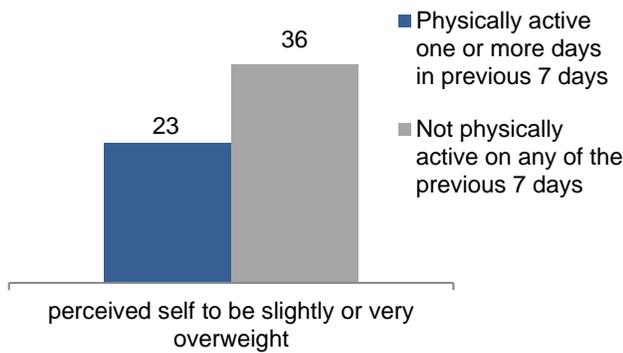


Figure 2: Percentage of students who perceived themselves to be slightly or very overweight by whether they were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on the previous 7 days.

- Students who were not physically active at least 60 minutes per day on any of the previous 7 days were less likely to receive As and Bs in school (0.4 times as likely) (fig. 3).

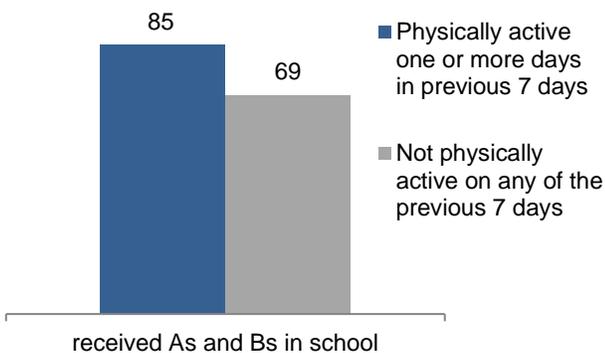


Figure 3: Percentage of students receiving As and Bs in school, by whether they were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on the previous 7 days.

Screen Time

- Sixty-four percent of students watched TV or used the computer for something other than schoolwork for more than 2 hours per average school day.
- Sixteen percent of students used the computer for something other than schoolwork for at least 5 hours per average school day, and 9% of students watched TV for 5 hours or more per average school day (fig. 4).

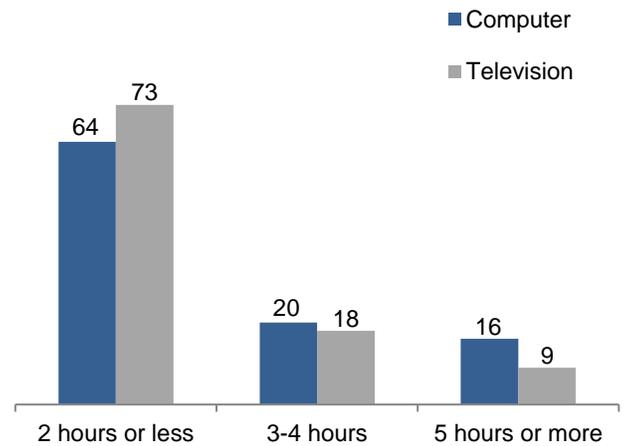


Figure 4: Percentage of students reporting average school day computer use and TV watching, by number of hours.

MORE INFORMATION

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. August 2009. Youth Physical Activity: The Role of Schools. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/toolkit/factsheet_pa_guidelines_schools.pdf
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. June 2015. Physical Activity and the Health of Young People. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/facts.htm>
3. NCHS Data Brief. No. 157. July 2014 <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db157.pdf>

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