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# Teenage girls and sport activities

## Parent's Guide for Active Girls



Small scale partnership in sport

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Parent's Guide for Active Girls, a comprehensive resource developed as part of the TeensActivity project, co-funded under the Erasmus program as a small collaborative partnership in sport.

This guide is the result of the collective efforts of five partners from four different countries (Serbia, North Macedonia, Portugal and Spain) who share a common goal – to empower parents in fostering an active and healthy lifestyle for their teenage daughters.

TeensActivity project is dedicated to addressing the vital need for promoting physical activity among teenage girls.

As parents, we understand the unique challenges and opportunities that come with raising teenagers. Navigating the transition from childhood to adolescence is a journey filled with academic, social, and personal growth. In the midst of these changes, maintaining an active lifestyle is pivotal for the overall well-being of teenage girls.

This guide is designed to provide you, as parents, with practical insights, valuable information, and actionable tips to navigate common barriers, celebrate the rewards, and support your teenage daughters in leading active and fulfilling lives.

Whether your daughter is passionate about sports, dance, or exploring new forms of physical activity, this guide is here to provide guidance on nurturing those interests.

Join us on this journey of empowerment as we strive to make a positive impact on the lives of teenage girls.

## COMMON BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR TEENAGE GIRLS

Before exploring into the common barriers hindering physical activity for teenage girls, it's essential to understand the broader landscape. According to past studies, a concerning trend has emerged, indicating that a substantial number of teenage girls are not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity. This lack of activity has been associated with various challenges, both physical and mental, impacting the overall well-being of this demographic.

General insights:

- A World Health Organization (WHO) report highlighted that globally, 81% of adolescents aged 11–17 years did not meet the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day.
- Factors such as increased screen time, academic pressures, and societal expectations contribute to the decline in physical activity levels among teenagers.
- Girls, in particular, face unique challenges, including concerns about body image, societal expectations, and access to sports facilities.

Now, let's explore some common barriers that teenage girls face when it comes to engaging in regular physical activity.

**Lack of time:** Busy schedules filled with school, extracurricular commitments, and social engagements make it challenging for teenage girls to allocate time for physical activity.

**Lack of interest:** Some girls may not find traditional sports appealing, posing a challenge for parents to motivate them towards physical activities.

**Pressure to conform to societal norms:** Concerns about body image may discourage girls from participating in activities that make them stand out or feel self-conscious.

**Fear of injury:** Concerns about getting hurt during sports or exercise might stop girls from participating.

**Limited access to resources:** Girls in low-income or rural areas may face barriers due to a lack of safe spaces for physical activity, such as parks or sports facilities.

## REWARDS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR TEENAGE GIRLS

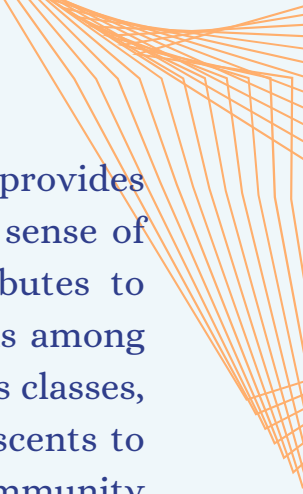
Before we delve into the specific rewards of physical activity for teenage girls, it's crucial to recognize the multitude of positive outcomes that await those who embrace an active lifestyle. Engaging in regular physical activity not only contributes to physical health but also plays a pivotal role in fostering mental well-being, confidence, and overall personal growth. Now, let's explore the numerous rewards that await teenage girls on their journey toward a more active and fulfilling life.

**Improved physical health:** Regular physical activity helps maintain a healthy weight, enhances cardiovascular health, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.

**Improved mental health:** Physical activity is linked to reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, contributing to better overall mental well-being.

**Increased self-esteem and confidence:** Engaging in physical activities boosts self-esteem and confidence, positively impacting self-image.

**Improved academic performance through physical activity:** Research consistently demonstrates a positive connection between physical activity, enhanced cognitive function, and improved academic performance in teenagers. Engaging in regular physical activity has been associated with cognitive benefits that contribute to academic success. Additionally, implementing school-based physical activity programs has shown promising results in not only enhancing academic performance but also positively influencing classroom behavior. Studies, such as the one titled "*Effects of the CATCH Physical Education Program on Physical Activity Levels and Cardiovascular Risk Factors in Elementary School Children*", have shown promising results in elementary school children. This particular study emphasizes the positive impact of structured physical education programs on physical activity levels and cardiovascular health in the school-age population. Integrating such evidence-based programs into school settings not only enhances academic performance but also contributes to overall student well-being.



**Increased social connections:** Participation in physical activities provides opportunities to meet new people, form friendships, and build a sense of community. Participation in physical activities not only contributes to individual well-being but also fosters increased social connections among teenagers. Research indicates that engaging in group sports, fitness classes, or recreational activities provides unique opportunities for adolescents to meet new people, form lasting friendships, and build a sense of community (Resaland et al., 2016)<sup>1</sup>. These social interactions, cultivated through shared physical activities, play a crucial role in shaping positive social dynamics, enhancing communication skills, and contributing to overall mental health

## TIPS FOR PARENTS OF TEENAGE GIRLS

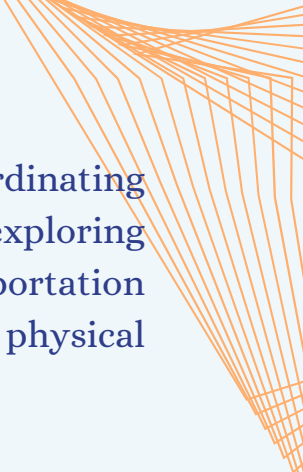
Navigating the teenage years is a dynamic and transformative journey for both parents and their daughters. As adolescents seek independence and face various challenges, it becomes crucial for parents to play a supportive and guiding role. The following tips are designed to empower parents in fostering an environment that encourages teenage girls to embrace an active lifestyle. By incorporating these strategies into your parenting approach, you can contribute to your daughter's physical well-being, boost her confidence, and strengthen the parent-daughter bond.

**Set a good example:** Actively incorporate physical activity into your daily routine, demonstrating its importance. Demonstrate the value of an active lifestyle by integrating physical activities into your own daily routine. Whether it's going for a jog, practicing yoga or engaging in recreational sports, your consistent commitment sets a powerful example for your daughter, emphasizing the normalcy and importance of staying active.

**Encourage variety:** Support your daughter in exploring a variety of physical activities to find what resonates with her interests. Help your daughter discover the joy of movement and physical activities by encouraging exploration. This might involve trying different sports, dance styles or fitness classes. The goal is to allow her to find activities that align with her interests and preferences, making physical activity an enjoyable and personalized experience.

**Support interests:** Invest in your daughter's interests by providing necessary equipment and resources for her chosen activities. Once your daughter identifies activities she enjoys, invest in the necessary resources and equipment. This support not only demonstrates your commitment to her interests but also removes practical barriers, making it easier for her to actively pursue and engage in her chosen activities.

**Provide transportation:** Ensure practical arrangements for transportation if walking or biking to activities is not feasible. Address logistical challenges by ensuring that transportation is not a hindrance to her participation.



Whether it's providing transportation to her sports practices, coordinating with friends, neighbors, or teammates' parents for rides, or exploring available public transportation options, addressing transportation challenges ensures that she can consistently participate in physical activities.


**Create a positive environment:** Cultivate a positive attitude towards physical activity by emphasizing the joy and satisfaction it brings, rather than framing it as a chore. Creating a supportive and encouraging environment reinforces the idea that being active is a positive and fulfilling choice, contributing to long-term engagement.

**Participate together:** Engage in physical activities together as a family. Family involvement not only promotes a healthy lifestyle but also strengthens family bonds. By participating together, you create shared memories, strengthen relationships, and make physical activity a positive and integrated part of family life. For instance, within the TeensActivity initiative, families enjoyed diverse joint activities, including bowling, basketball, badminton, cycling, running, surfing sessions, mother and daughter sport day, joint fitness and dance training sessions for mothers and daughters etc.

**Celebrate milestones:** Acknowledge and celebrate your daughter's achievements, whether big or small. Acknowledging and celebrating milestones, whether it's completing a challenging workout or achieving a personal fitness goal, reinforces a positive association with physical activity. It boosts her confidence and motivates her to continue progressing on her fitness journey.

**Set realistic goals:** Support your daughter in setting realistic fitness goals that align with her abilities and interests. Breaking down larger goals into smaller, more manageable steps can boost motivation. A part from that, provides a roadmap for success, boosting motivation and sustaining her commitment to an active lifestyle.





**Introduce social elements:** Encourage your daughter to participate in group activities or team sports. Engaging in group activities or team sports introduces a social dimension to physical activity.

The friendship/team member and shared experiences create a supportive community, making the journey more enjoyable and fostering lasting connections.

**Educate on health benefits:** Share information about the numerous health benefits associated with regular physical activity, such as improved mood, better sleep, and enhanced cognitive function.

**Incorporate technology:** Embrace the use of technology, such as fitness apps for home workouts or interactive games, to resonate with the preferences of tech-savvy teenagers, making the experience enjoyable and modern. For instance, during TeensActivity, smart bracelets were utilized to track calorie consumption during various physical activities, coupled with the FitPro application. This innovative approach captured the interest of girls, adding a fascinating dimension to their engagement with training and physical activities. The use of technology not only made the activities more engaging but also added a sense of seriousness, enhancing the overall experience for the participants.

**Be patient and supportive:** Understand that developing a habit takes time. Adopting a habit of regular physical activity is a gradual process. Fostering a positive attitude toward the journey emphasizes the importance of enjoyment and personal growth over immediate results. Be patient, supportive, and avoid placing undue pressure on your daughter. Encourage a positive attitude toward her journey to an active lifestyle.

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