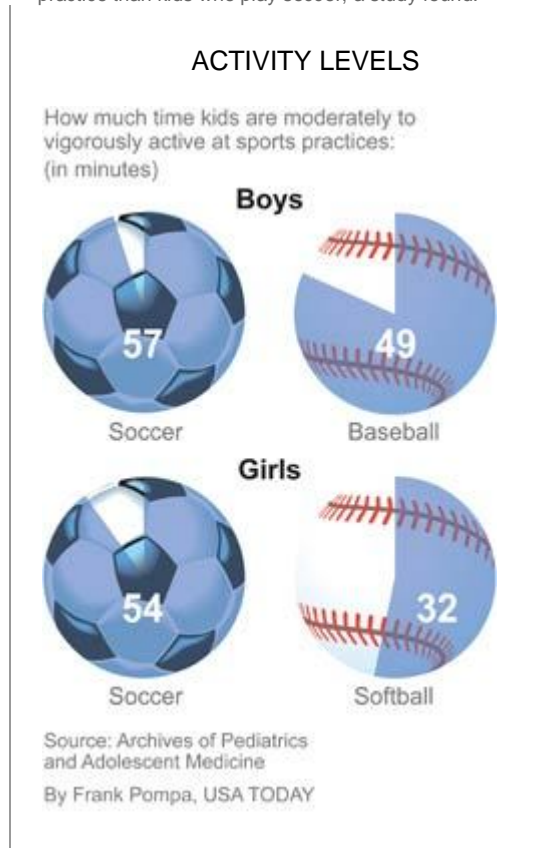


# Kids active only about half of time in sports practices



By Ryan McVay, Photodisc

Kids who play softball are generally less active during practice than kids who play soccer, a study found.



By **Nanci Hellmich**, USA TODAY

Kids on soccer, baseball and softball teams are playing hard during practices an average of 45 minutes, which is less than half the time they're there, a study shows. "Millions of youth participate in sports, but kids are spending a lot of time waiting their turn, getting instruction or doing skills practice, which may not be very active, especially in baseball and softball," says exercise researcher James Sallis, director of the Active Living Research Program at San Diego State University. He and colleagues recruited 200 children, ages 7-14, on 29 different community sports teams for soccer, baseball and softball. There were equal numbers of girls and boys. About one-fourth of the players wore accelerometers during practices to calculate how much of the time they were moderately to vigorously active. Practice times ranged from 40 to 130 minutes for soccer; 35 to 217 minutes for baseball and softball. The government's physical activity guidelines recommend that children

get at least 60 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Among the findings in Monday's issue of the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*:

- On average, kids were moderately to vigorously active for 45 minutes, which was 46% of their practice time.
- 24% of all the team members met the one-hour activity goal; only 2% of girl softball players met the recommendation.
- Girls were less active than boys in all sports, but only by an average of 11 minutes per practice.
- The most active players overall were soccer players, boys and children ages 10-14.

Other research shows that children are often more active during free play than structured activities, because the more time coaches spend giving instruction and doing some drills, the less activity kids get, Sallis says. Girls playing softball were particularly inactive, he says, so coaches could set a goal of incorporating more physical activity during those practices. "Even if kids are spending an hour and a half at a sports practice, most aren't getting all the activity they need for the day," Sallis says. "So parents may need to find some other way to make sure their kids are getting 60 minutes of activity a day."

## **16 minutes of exercise separates fit, unfit kids**

By Anne Godlasky, USA TODAY

Source: December issue of 'Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise'

Nanci Hellmich, USA TODAY

Normal-weight children get 16 more minutes of physical activity a day than their obese peers, a new study shows. And overall, girls do 20 minutes less physical activity a day than boys. "This is a huge wake-up call to society," says Donna Spruijt-Metz, the senior author of the study and an associate professor of medicine at the [University of Southern California](#). A third of American children are overweight or obese. The government's physical activity guidelines recommend that kids and teens get an hour or more of moderate-intensity to vigorous aerobic physical activity a day. Researchers at the University of Southern California and the [National Institutes of Health](#) analyzed government activity data on 3,106 children. The kids wore accelerometers to measure their physical activity levels for four days. The study, published in this month's *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, the journal of the American College of Sports Medicine, shows:

Normal-weight children ages 6 to 17 are moderately to vigorously active for 59 minutes a day, compared with 43 minutes for obese children that age.

Overall, boys ages 6 to 17 are active an average of about 64 minutes a day, compared with 44 minutes for girls in that same age range.

Girls need to get more exercise to establish an active lifestyle, which will help with weight control and reduce their risk of diseases such as cancer as adults, says the study's lead author Britni Belcher.