

# TEEN TOPICS

## Physical Activity Key To Preventing Obesity And Improving Academic Performance In Teens

(NAPSA)—Too little exercise, not overeating, is responsible for obesity among adolescents, according to a recent study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Given rising obesity rates among children and adults, experts are searching for the right combination of dietary or physical activity changes needed to prevent obesity and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Dr. Lisa Sutherland, a research assistant professor at UNC's School of Public Health in the Department of Nutrition, found that from 1980 through 2000, obesity increased 10 percent, while physical activity decreased 13 percent. During the same period, caloric intake rose just one percent among American teens.

Results of the study indicate that an increase in moderate physical activity offers the best hope for losing weight and staying fit, especially for children.

"Much of the debate regarding obesity has been focused on diet, yet there is evidence to suggest that activity plays a significant role in obesity for kids 12 to 19 years of age," Sutherland said. "The decrease in physical education in schools, changes in transportation methods and popularity of television, video games and the Internet all contribute to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle for kids. Given these trends, it is crucial that we find new and creative ways to increase physical activity in adolescents as a first line of defense to combatting obesity," she added.



**For teens, more physical activity is the prescription for fighting obesity and staying fit.**

In addition to improved health, physically fit children also perform better academically, according to a California Department of Education study. In the study, fifth-, seventh- and ninth-grade students who had more physical education achieved higher scores in math and reading.

"The key equation in preventing obesity and maintaining a healthy lifestyle is that energy in should equal energy out," said Sutherland. "That leaves consumers with a choice—eat less or exercise more. For optimal results, most people should do both."

Most healthcare professionals agree that the keys to a healthy lifestyle are a balanced diet and 30 to 60 minutes of daily physical activity, not restrictions on specific foods.

There are some easy ways to be more active. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, mow the lawn with a push mower instead of a riding mower or take a family bike ride. For more information on how to increase physical activity, log onto [www.naspe.org](http://www.naspe.org).