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Another Reason To Love Having Your Child on the Swim Team

[Editors note: This recent article by Nanci Hellmich in USA Today reminds us of how wonderful our sport of swimming is. Our swimmers are continually active in practices.]

Kids Active Only About Half Of Time In Sports Practices

By Nanci Hellmich, USA TODAY

http://www.usatoday.com/yourlife/fitness/exercise/2010-12-07-youthsports07_ST_N.htm

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."

[Editor's concluding note about the above comment: "That 'other way' is swimming! Sign them up for the swim team!"]