

# Study finds that few children meet daily exercise guideline goals

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"Clearly, schools need to be aware of this disparity and should focus on increasing all intensities of physical activity equally for all children across the school day," said Jennifer Sacheck. Credit: iStock

Guidelines recommend that children get an hour of exercise every day, including a half hour during school. Unfortunately, a study finds that few kids are meeting that goal, with girls particularly likely to fall short during school time.

A team led by Tufts researchers tracked the physical activity of 453 third, fourth and fifth graders at schools throughout Massachusetts for a week. They found that only 15 percent of children were getting the 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (such as bike riding, playing tag or jumping rope) that the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend. Just 8 percent were getting 30 minutes during the school day, as recommended by the Institute of Medicine.

The researchers expected the school day to be an equalizer, giving boys, girls and children of different weights similar exposure to physical activity. "Instead, we found that girls and

[overweight children](#) were less active for all measured segments, including during the school day," said first author Kristie Hubbard, an adjunct instructor in the Department of Public Health and Community Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Girls were far less likely than boys to meet the guidelines, as only 8 percent met the daily total and 2 percent met school-time recommendations. Overweight and obese children were less active as well, both in and out of school.

The researchers also measured the students' light physical activity, such as walking around. Girls and boys did similar amounts of light activity outside of school, but girls clocked significantly fewer minutes than boys during the school day. And all the children did less light physical activity as they got older.

Jennifer Sacheck, N01, the study's senior author and an associate professor at Tufts' Friedman School, said schools need to give kids more opportunities for physical activity—from light to vigorous—and pay special attention to [girls](#). "Clearly, schools need to be aware of this disparity and should focus on increasing all intensities of [physical activity](#) equally for all [children](#) across the [school](#) day," she said.

Provided by Tufts University

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