

The essential guide for Sydney parents

**HOW TEAM SPORTS  
CAN IMPROVE YOUR  
CHILD'S PHYSICAL AND  
MENTAL HEALTH**

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## CHAPTER ONE

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# INTRODUCTION

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***In a time where most kids are spending more time on their smart devices than they are running around outside, team sports are becoming more important than ever.***

A study by [Childwise](#) found that kids between the ages of 5 and 16 are spending an average of six and a half hours a day in front of their screens, which include tablets, computers, mobile phones, video consoles and TVs.

It's therefore not surprising that [1 in 4 Australian kids](#) are now overweight or obese.

According to Australia's physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines, children between the ages of 5 and 12 should be getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity (moderate to vigorous intensity) every day.

This should include a variety of different aerobic activities, and kids should also be engaging in activities that strengthen their bones and muscles (running, skipping, jumping, climbing, dancing, tug-o-war,) 3 times a week.

The annual [Active Healthy Kids Australia Report Card](#) assigns grades depending on the level of physical activity and sedentary behaviours. In 2014, Australia was rated D- for its overall physical activity levels.

The [2009-2010 NSW Population Health Survey](#) also found that only a quarter of kids aged 5 to 15 were getting the recommended 60 minutes of exercise. Since levels of physical activity typically decrease as people age, it's crucial that kids are forming healthy habits while young in order to avoid obesity the health problems that come with it.



## CHAPTER TWO

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# TEAM SPORTS AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

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## Obesity

The rate of obesity in Australia is confronting. In 2014-15, [11.2 million Australians](#) (63.4%) were overweight or obese. Unfortunately, overweight and obese adults are also [more likely to have overweight or obese kids](#).

Between 1985 and 1995, the number of obese children in Australia more than tripled. It's now predicted that by 2020, at the current rate, 65% of young Australians will be either overweight or obese.

## Health problems

There are a number of health problems associated with obesity in children. These include:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Eating disorders
- Liver problems
- Orthopaedic disorders
- Cardiomyopathy
- Sleep Apnoea

80% of children who are obese will become obese adults.

## How team sports impact obesity rates

A [7-year study of adolescent health](#), published in the journal Paediatrics aimed to explore the relationship between physical activity and childhood obesity.

The study analysed a number of different factors, including:

- Whether the kids actively commuted to school (walking or biking)
- Physical education (P.E) classes during school
- Amount of sedentary time
- Sports team participation

The kids who were on at least three different sports teams were 27% less likely to be overweight, and were also 39% less likely to be obese than their non-sports playing counterparts. While active commuting didn't impact their likelihood of being overweight, it did lessen their chances of being obese. P.E classes didn't make any difference at all.

Researchers found that participation in sports teams usually meant that the kids were performing moderate to strenuous exertion. They also found:

- 40% of teens who didn't play any sports were either overweight or obese
- 31% of kids who were on one sports team were overweight or obese
- This dropped to 25% of kids who were on two sports teams, and 20% of kids who were on three or more sports teams.

This shows a direct correlation between the number of sports teams a child is a member of, and their chance of being obese. The authors also suggested that there would be a 26.1% decrease in the prevalence of obesity if all kids played on at least two sports teams each year.

## Cardiovascular health

Physical activity and team sports help improve cardiovascular endurance. And cardiovascular health decreases our risk for heart disease, which is one of Australia's biggest health problems, killing [one person every 12 minutes](#).

By regularly participating in team sports, your child will be getting a great cardiovascular workout, keeping them fit and healthy.

## Physical Development

A [New Zealand study](#) found that participating in physical exercise both before, and during puberty helps kids reach peak bone mass. Team sports help them develop stronger bones and muscles which are the foundation for their future growth.

Sports, particularly those involving dribbling a ball, running, weaving, and footwork all improve children's motor skills. Since humans have greater coordination in their hands than their feet, team sports like soccer help kid's feet gain abilities and learn muscle movements that would otherwise take longer to achieve.



## CHAPTER THREE

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# TEAM SPORTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Team sports also improve children's mental health in the following ways:

## **Resilience**

Resilience is a skill that is hard to teach, and it's built when kids learn to get back up after falling down. [Studies have shown](#) that kids involved in sport are more psychologically resilient. It's easy to see why when sport teaches kids to keep playing after losing, pick themselves up after a tackle, and learn from their mistakes.

By becoming mentally tough at a young age, kids are likely to be better equipped to deal with challenges as they become adults.

## **Stress and anxiety**

Exercise is a natural stress reliever, stimulating the production of endorphins which have a "feel-good" response, helping to relieve symptoms of tension and anxiety. Research published in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#) found that students who play team sports between the ages of 13-18 have better mental health and less stress when they're young adults.

## **Teamwork**

When kids play team sports, they learn to collaborate with their peers to reach a common goal. They're building skills that will allow them to work together with a variety of personalities in the future (even the people they may not like).

Team sports also encourage friendships and help kids feel empathy for their teammates. A good coach will teach kids that all actions should be for the good of the team, emphasising positive relationships and communication.

## Self-Esteem

According to [KidsHealth](#), kids with low self-esteem are more likely to have behavioural and social problems as they become teenagers and adults. By developing competence or expertise in sports, many children will naturally feel a sense of personal effectiveness. They're also likely to feel more autonomous, both of which are associated with self-esteem.

According to [developmental psychologist Jean Piaget](#), the foundations of self-esteem are laid between the ages of 6 to 11. Parents, coaches, and teachers can all help ensure that kids are participating in team sports and having positive experiences.

There have been a number of studies focusing on the intersection between sports and self-esteem for children:

- A Canadian study, [Self-Esteem and Causal Attributions for Children's Physical and Social Competence in Sport](#) found that kids in the sixth grade who were the most physically active also had much higher levels of self-esteem.
- The [Swiss Multicentric Adolescent Survey on Health](#) found that children participating in sports clubs felt less anxious, were better socially adjusted, and had a greater sense of well-being.
- A Latino study, [The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health](#) also found that participation in school sports was significantly associated with a child's level of self-esteem.

Team sports help to build peer-acceptance, which in turn creates higher levels of self-esteem. However it's crucial that children are having positive experiences while playing sports, including supportive coaches and a bullying-free environment.

## Emotional Control

Team sports teach children discipline and give them practice controlling their emotions. They learn how to respect their coach and referee's decisions, support their teammates, and win and lose gracefully.

While team sports allow kids to enjoy healthy competition, they also learn how to bounce back after a loss. Some kids may throw a tantrum after losing a game or missing a goal, but gentle correction from parents and coaches will teach them how to focus on doing better next time instead of mentally replaying the loss.

By learning how to control their emotional responses, kids also learn how to concentrate on what they need to do during high-pressure situations. This is hugely beneficial for when they encounter adversity in the real world.



*“Never underestimate the art of under-coaching”*

LEON KITA

## When can my child join a sports team?

Children can begin playing sport at any age, and it's not uncommon for younger siblings to decide they also want to play once they see their big brother or sister having fun with their teammates.

However, there are some general age groups in place for competitive sports, and following them will make it less likely that your child will experience stress and disappointment.

While kids mature at different rates, here are some guidelines:

### **5 and under**

There are many sports clubs for kids under 6, although most children don't develop the attention span and physical skills needed to play the game properly until they're around 6 or 7. That doesn't mean that they can't enjoy learning how to throw and run, even if they don't quite understand the rules of the game.

Sports teams for kids under the age of 6 shouldn't be focused on competition and should be more about learning the different skills they need to play the game and allowing kids to have fun with their teammates. This is when kids begin to develop spatial awareness, coordination and balance.

If you have a young child who wants to play a team sport, be sure to find a sport and club that emphasises basic skills and fun.

## **6 to 8-year-olds**

Children between the age of 6 and 8 still need to have the freedom to play while learning the skills of kicking, catching, and throwing.

The most successful team sports will be organised while ensuring that kids are having fun while they develop their skills. They may begin learning about competition, and the coach may split the team in two for practices so they can begin learning the rules of the game.

While they may play in junior competitions during the weekend, these games are “just for fun”, and there’s no real focus on winning or “beating the other team.”

## **8 to 10-year-olds**

By the time a child is 8, they’ve usually had some experience playing sport, either on a team or at school. This is when they begin grasping some of the different nuances inherent in competition and begin learning that sometimes, even when you try your best you may lose the game.

This age group will usually have practice sessions through the week, along with a game on weekends. They often still need help coping with disappointment and will be developing these skills. This is also often when kids will try lots of different sports before picking the ones they enjoy most.

## **11 to 15-year-olds**

Some kids in this age group will have a special talent for a particular sport. This can mean that individual coaching or a development team may be appropriate.

Kids in this age group will have better attention spans and memories, allowing them to remember strategy and different plays. However, kids develop at different times, so if your 14-year-old doesn’t seem to be progressing along with their peers, don’t give up. They may not begin showing promise until they’re 16-18.



## CHAPTER FOUR

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# JUNIOR SPORT OPPORTUNITIES IN SYDNEY

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## KIKOFF

Football (or soccer) is an excellent way for kids to improve their fitness, with lots of sprinting down the field. They'll also improve their stamina and agility, since dribbling, passing, and shooting the ball all help with coordination.

KIKOFF has 4 high-quality facilities across the city, and provide soccer schools, development squads, 5-a-side leagues, junior coaching, and bubble soccer. If you'd like to introduce your child to football, KIKOFF also has soccer parties, or your kids can give it a try with a free trial session.

## City Hoops

Basketball is another great sport for hand-eye coordination and teamwork. City Hoops offers holiday basketball camps, Learn to Play classes for 6 to 12-year-olds, and elite training for kids aged 11 to 16. City Hoops is located throughout Sydney, and the team prioritise fun for kids of all ages.

## NetSetGO

NetSetGO is the only junior netball program in Australia, providing kids between 5 and 10 with their first introduction to netball. The program incorporates dance, music, minor games, skills activities, and modified matches.

Netball is a fun sport for kids of all ages (not just girls), and NetSetGO has plenty of clubs throughout Sydney, making it easy for your kids to play during the week and on weekends.

## **Easts Cricket Club**

Kids who play cricket learn to keep their eye on the ball and rely on their teammates. It also combines downtime with short bursts of speed, which is a great way for kids to increase their fitness.

Eastern Suburbs Cricket Club is one of Australia's largest clubs and has a range of options for all ages. The Milo In2Cricket clinic is for kids from 4-8 years old, and the club also has under 9s, under 16s, and under 17s available.

## **Sixers Girls Cricket League**

Sometimes girls just want to learn to play cricket in a supportive, all-girls environment. The Sixers Girls Cricket League has clubs throughout Sydney, so girls can learn to play cricket while making new friends and growing their confidence.

## **Sydney Junior Rugby Union**

As one of Australia's most popular sports, you'll find junior rugby clubs throughout Sydney. The under 6 to under 9 age groups play in seven different minis competitions around the city, and the games are modified for their age.

For parents who are worried about their kids getting hurt playing rugby, the junior teams are touch-only up to 8 years old, and all coaches are focused on developing player's skills while promoting an enjoyable environment.

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**TRY  
KIKOFF TODAY**

**FREE TRIAL**

Providing junior coaching, bubble football, kids holiday football camps and parties, KIKOFF is the perfect team sport for kids of all ages.

The state-of-the-art facilities and experienced, supportive coaches will have your kids developing their skills while having fun and making friends.

Your kids will improve their coordination, increase their self-esteem, and will learn to play well with team mates. They'll also develop a healthy relationship with sport and fitness which will benefit them throughout their lives

If you're looking for a challenging, enjoyable team sport for your kids, get in touch today to learn more.