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Media Release – Worried about your Teenagers Physical Activity Levels?

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



## Worried About Your Teenagers Physical Activity Levels?

**For every kid hitting the great outdoors, enjoying being active and staying fit with friends and family, there is most likely a child who is the complete opposite, sleeping in and spending much of their awake time in front of screens; big or small.**

It's a concern of many parents how can they keep their kids active as they get older, and throughout the teenage years, as technology and study compete with more physical activities.

Teenagers in NZ are doing better than their overseas counterparts, with an average of 3 hours screen time daily, as opposed to American teens who spend up to 5 1/2 hours, and Australian teens with almost 4 hours, but it's still not ideal.

For many parents the fight to get their teens active seems like a futile one, but it's worth the effort, both in the short term and the long term. For while we focus often on sedentary adults, as their lifestyle choices result in ill health effects sooner as middle age approaches, there are many health impacts that begin in the early years, even more so now that technology offers so many non physical diversions.

Over use injuries that were once limited to those who worked long hours in an office are more commonly being seen in younger people, as they lean over their phone and spend multiple hours in small motor movements while texting or on a gaming unit controller.

Many parents, despairing at their teenagers lack of weekend and holiday activity may fall into the trap of thinking that school hours provide an opportunity for their teenagers to be active, but as a study in the US shows, this may not be the case. The study was designed to test where kids were most active, and was carried out by researchers at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. The research showed that despite teenagers spending 42 percent of their day at school, they are getting a lot less activity at school than first thought. In fact the study participants only spent about 4.8 percent of their time at school actually physically active.

Inactivity doesn't just have long term consequences, as it can also interrupt sleeping, especially when combined with computer and electronic device use, which can then lead to a struggle to get up and a lack of focus throughout the day.

While the preference for many parents would be to have their kids active as much as possible, there is research to show that health benefits are seen with even short bursts of activity.

A study released last year looked at short, regular activity breaks throughout an extended period of inactivity. While the study was small, it shows that interrupting periods of prolonged sitting with regular intervals of moderate-intensity walking might be an effective strategy for reducing children's risk of diabetes and heart disease. The study's senior author, Jack A. Yanovski, M.D, chief of NICHHD's Section on Growth and Obesity stated that *"It can be difficult to fit longer stretches of physical activity into the day. Our study indicates that even small activity breaks could have a substantial impact on children's long-term health."*

For active parents who are struggling with inactive teenagers, advice is no further away than your own exercise facility, or personal trainer. With the volume of information (or misinformation) available online, and from well-meaning but incorrect peers, the advice from an appropriately qualified REPs Registered Exercise Professional, and the support of a REPs Registered Exercise Facility environment can be extremely positive, allowing teens to get the exercise they need to get, and stay active and healthy in a supportive environment.

We recommend using a REPs Registered Personal Trainer or Exercise Professional as the only safe way to ensure the advice they receive is based on evidence based fact and experience, rather than an internet or Google search.

References:

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References:

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**Who is the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)?**

REPs is an independent non profit organisation administrating the New Zealand exercise professionals register to ensure that the public receive safe and effective exercise advice.

Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "Warrant of Fitness Check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

