



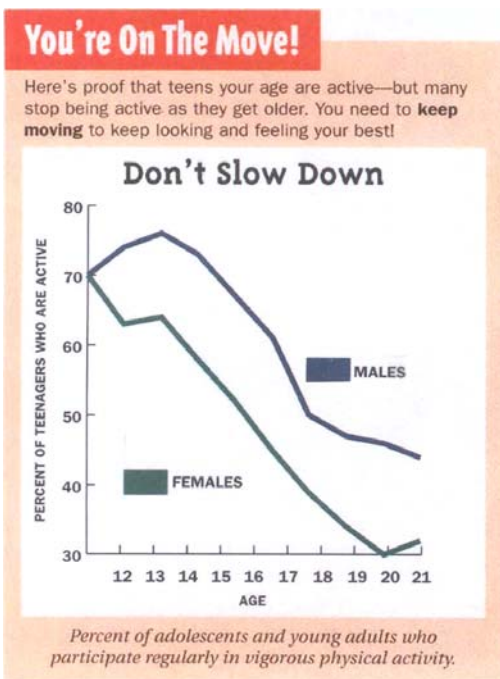
# Parents Make A Difference!

## Active Teens

January 2005

### Many Teens Stop Being Active

According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly a third of young people aged 12 to 21 are not vigorously active on a regular basis. The graph below shows the dramatic drop in activity levels.



Source: Yourself, USDA 1998

Everyone needs to keep moving to keep looking and feeling good. Children and adolescents should be encouraged to get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity every day.

### What's working against young people being more active?

Youth today are busy. They have school, jobs, extra-curricular and non-school activities which keep them occupied. Unfortunately, many are not physically active for various reasons.

➤ Jobs held by teens. According to the 2001 Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) of 5,704 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 32% of teens spend more than 10 hours per week in a paid job.

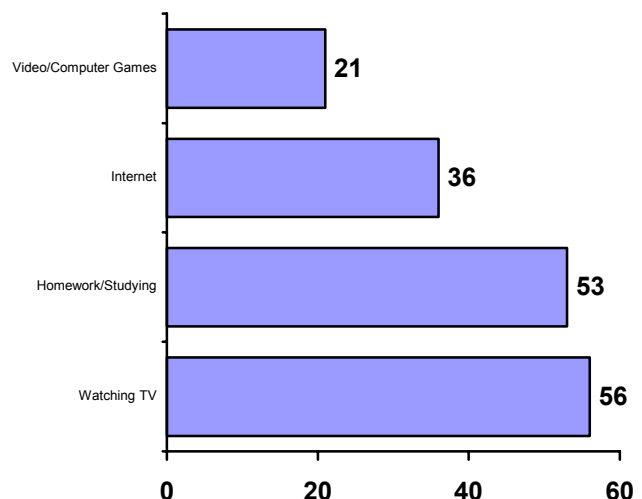
➤ People drive to most locations. In fact, recent surveys indicate that for trips under a half-mile, 57 percent of people drive. Walking and bicycling by children aged 5-15 dropped 40% between 1977 and 1995 according to a national transportation survey.

➤ Scheduled physical activities, such as formal physical education time in schools, are less available than in the past.

➤ Older teens are not involved in youth sports. Although an estimated 38 million young people participate in youth sports programs, participation declines substantially as children progress through adolescence. Young people start dropping out of youth sports at age 10, however, the peak drop-out time is when teens are 14 to 15 years old.

➤ Teens today spend time watching TV, playing video games, and chatting on the Internet. The chart below shows data from the SWYS Survey taken in 2001.

### Percent of Teens Spending 5 or more hours/week



## Active Teens. Healthy Teens.

It doesn't take a lot of physical activity to make a difference and any activity is better than no activity, according to Jon Morgan, Physical Activity Coordinator at the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services.

Dr. Mike Sharratt, Dean of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo, suggests that "providing your child with the gift of learning a life-long skill such as skating, skiing, dancing, golf, or another activity is the best present a parent can give a child." He explains that these activities will help children grow into active and healthy adults, with lower risk of obesity, stroke and heart disease, and certain kinds of cancers. Active teens are building and maintaining healthy bones, muscles and joints.

### BE ACTIVE

- ✓ **At least 60 minutes/day**
- ✓ **At least 5 days a week**
- ✓ **Everyday activities count**

Being physically active also helps adults and children handle stress. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends regular physical activity to help increase children's and adolescents' self-esteem and capacity for learning.

The benefits of being active as a family extend beyond physical health. Being active as a family promotes time together. It demonstrates that being active can be fun.

### Ways to Encourage Teens to Be Active

✍ Any physical activity is better than none. You don't need to get your daily activity at one time; you can have several shorter periods of activity that add up to 30 minutes or more per day.

👥 Involve others for social interaction and "peer pressure" to stay involved. People, including teens, are more likely to stay with an activity that involves interaction with others.

👨‍👩‍👧‍👦 One way is to be active together. Go on family walks and play outdoor games together whenever you can. Go sledding, ice-skating, or cross-country skiing. Many families enjoy bowling together or swimming at local indoor pools.

🐕 Involve family members in household activities and keep the work enjoyable. For example, shovel snow and make a snowman together or take the dog for a walk together.

🎵 Build physical activities into everyday routines. Park cars further away and walk to school. Use stairs instead of elevators. Play energetic music while doing household chores. Encourage extra body motion to the rhythms.

## REMEMBER: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

"Parents Make a Difference" is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This issue of "Parents Make a Difference" was written by Sarah Weier, UW-Extension Iowa County and edited by Ruth Schrieffer and Deb Ivey UW-Extension Iowa County, Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant and Lafayette County and Bev Doll, UW-Extension Grant County. Thanks are extended to the 5,704 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2001 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html> for more information, or by phone Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Iowa County (608) 935-0391.