**Why physical activity is important**



You may wonder if being physically active is really worth the time and effort. Well, lots of girls think so! They know being active is a great way to have fun and hang out with friends. And fitness can do some pretty amazing things for your mind and body. Check out:

* What being active does for your mental health
* What being active does for your body

**What being active does for your mental health ** top

Did you know being physically active can affect how good you feel? It also can affect how well you do your tasks, and even how pleasant you are to be around. That's partly because physical activity gets your brain to make "feel-good" chemicals called endorphins (say: en-DOR-fins). Regular physical activity may help you by:

* Reducing stress
* Improving sleep
* Boosting your energy
* Reducing symptoms of [anxiety](https://www.girlshealth.gov/feelings/anxious/index.html) and [depression](https://www.girlshealth.gov/feelings/sad/depression.html)
* Increasing your self-esteem
* Making you feel proud for taking good care of yourself
* Improving how well you do at school

**What being active does for your body ** top

Being physically active is great for your muscles, heart, and lungs. It may even help with nasty [PMS](https://www.girlshealth.gov/body/period/pms.html#symptoms) symptoms! Some other possible benefits of activity include:

* **Building strong bones.** Your body creates the most bone when you are a kid and a teen. You can learn more about [how to build great bones](https://www.girlshealth.gov/nutrition/bonehealth/eating-for-strong-bones.html).
* **Promoting a healthy weight.** [Obesity](https://www.girlshealth.gov/glossary/websiteGlossary.html#obesity) is a serious problem among kids in the United States. It can lead to problems with your sleep, knees, heart, emotions, and more, but exercise can help.
* **Helping avoid diabetes.** A lot more young people are getting [diabetes](https://www.girlshealth.gov/disability/types/diabetes.html) than ever before. Regular physical activity can help prevent one type of diabetes.
* **Building healthy habits.** If you get used to being active now, you will more likely keep it up when you're older. You'll thank yourself later!
* **Fighting cancer.** Research shows that exercise may help protect against certain kinds of cancer, including breast cancer.
* **Helping prevent high blood pressure.** The number of kids with high blood pressure is growing. High blood pressure makes your heart and [arteries](https://www.girlshealth.gov/glossary/websiteGlossary.html#artery) work extra hard to pump blood. It also puts you at risk for things like kidney and eye disease.

Are you worried that exercise will bulk you up? Exercising won't give you big, bulging muscles. It takes a very intense weightlifting program to get a body-builder look. And exercise and other forms of physical activity can help if you need to lose weight or want to stay [a healthy weight](https://www.girlshealth.gov/fitness/whygetfit/weightloss.html).