

Are there special
benefits for girls
participating in sport? ►



There are several unique benefits for girls who participate in sport. In the past, school was the main place where girls could be successful. Sport offers a wonderful opportunity for girls to be successful outside the classroom as they experience new challenges and learn new skills.

Sport also helps girls break down the traditional female myths linking accomplishments to looks and beauty. It gives young girls a better appreciation of their bodies and they may be less likely to smoke and be pressured by the razor-thin images of females typical of the advertising media and the fashion industry. Although some sports such as gymnastics and figure skating are frequently linked with eating disorders in young girls, most sports give young girls a healthy attitude about their bodies.

Health professionals now recognize that girls, who tend to smoke more than boys, use smoking as a means of weight control. Dr. Carole Guzman, former president of the Canadian Medical Association, reports that among young people, high levels of fitness are associated with a lower level of smoking and drinking behaviour, healthier eating habits, and with increased self-esteem.

A recent University of Southern California study reports that a young women's risk of developing breast cancer is significantly reduced if she engages in regular physical exercise as early in life as her first menstrual period.

Are some children better suited to individual or to team sports?

It is hard for parents to know whether a child will be a team player or take to individual sports. And there's no research to prove certain temperaments make better individual athletes or produce stronger team members.

Experts agree that giving children an opportunity to participate in both individual and team sports will help them to make the choice that's right for them. Children will eventually show their preference by saying they prefer skiing to soccer or hockey instead of swimming.

Young girls, in particular, should be encouraged to participate in both individual and team sports. Girls typically lean towards individual sports. That means they miss out on the lessons learned in a team environment such as how to be a leader and how to be a team player.