



SPORT PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD

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WHAT WE DID

- We studied how sport participation evolves throughout adolescence and early adulthood to better understand the factors that contribute to long-term sport participation.
- MATCH is a longitudinal study including 929 participants. The study was initiated with Grade 5 and 6 students in 2011 and continued until 2019, which marked the end of high school for participants. During this time, we surveyed participants 3 times per year.
- From 2020 to 2023, we extended the follow-up of MATCH participants with 3 additional annual survey cycles to examine the nature of sport participation into early adulthood alongside impactful events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- What parents and guardians can do to foster long-term sport participation:
 - **Encourage a variety of activities:** Support your child in exploring multiple sports or activities, including both organized and unorganized ones. Exposure to a range of activities can help them find what they enjoy and stay active in the long term.
 - **Foster enjoyment and competence:** Focus on activities that your child finds enjoyable and where they can feel competent. Create an environment where they have the freedom to choose activities they like, rather than pushing them into structured sports or forcing participation.
 - **Get active in sports:** Be a model for your child by participating in sport or other physical activities on a regular basis. Show them how being active in sport benefits you!

WHAT WE FOUND

- Adolescents who engaged in unorganized activities or multiple sports were the most physically active in early adulthood
- Organized and group-based sports are less likely to be maintained through adolescence compared to unorganized activities and individual sports
- Youth who were very active, especially in team sports, were more likely to use physical activity to cope with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Using physical activity as a coping strategy was effective in managing stress and was linked to better mental health in adults
- **Key determinants of sustained sport participation included:**
 - Being motivated by enjoyment and a sense of competence
 - Perceiving yourself as competent, participating of your own free will, and feeling connected with others
 - Experiencing ‘internal’ barriers, such as a lack of interest
 - Having parents who encourage and facilitate sport participation without exerting high levels of control
 - Having parents who are active in sport and model healthy sport participation

