

Social Importance of Sports in Children and Adolescents

Gesellschaftliche Bedeutung von Sport im Kindes- und Jugendalter

If we look at how the membership numbers in the DOSB have developed over the past years, it becomes clear that there has been a marked reduction in the proportion of children enrolled in clubs both among girls and boys, especially in during the transition from 2020 to 2021. A trend, which has been observed apparently independent of Corona for a number of years, is the decrease in sports-active adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 years.

The records for 2019 show a slight increase in the age group up to 6 years (about 3% in both boys and girls), hardly any changes in the age group from 7 to 14 years and a continuous reduction over a number of years in the age group from 15 to 18 years (ca. 3% for boys, 2% for girls). After the pandemic broke out, there was a decrease among children up to 6 years by 17% (boys) and 18% (girls) and 5-6% among the 7 to 14-year-olds. Happily, there was a slight increase in the past year by 6%, resp. 4% among the children up to 6 years and at least among boys by 2% among the 7 to 14-year-olds. The number of 15 to 18-year-olds is still decreasing by ca. 2% (here especially among the girls) (2).

That sports are particularly meaningful during the years of growth has been scientifically confirmed in numerous studies and affects a wide variety of developmental areas. Physical development can be supported by improved conditional and coordinative capacity, there are a number of positive aspects on health and well-being and adaption-related structural effects on the skeleton, musculature, tendons, the cardiovascular system and metabolism. Sports can also support children in their emotional and social development (3).

Leisure-Time Sports

Of course club sports alone cannot be held responsible for the fact that children are not sufficiently motivated to exercise. The decreasing number of volunteer assistants in clubs and the increasing financial burdens in many clubs, currently intensified by inflation and increasing energy costs, are often cited as the reasons for a decrease in the availability of sports. The increasing trend toward attendance at whole-day

schools doesn't make it easy for clubs to get children to participate in clubs in the afternoon. Cooperation between schools and local sports clubs is not to be found everywhere and is, unfortunately, all too seldom.

School Sports

Thus, the schools and the Minister of Culture responsible in each State are confronted once again with the necessity of improving physical activity and sports in childhood. If we look at our European neighbors, we observe possibilities of achieving positive effects by prioritizing exercise and sports during the school day. In the Scandinavian countries, the obligatory principle of an exercise hour, usually before starting lessons, and close ties with clubs have been practiced for several years. In an international comparison, the effects of physical activity were found to be one factor affecting academic performance in the framework of the PISA Study in recent years. In Switzerland, a Sports Promotion Law was passed in 2012 requiring at least 3 hours of sports in the obligatory school and at the secondary level 2 (1). The effects on high-performance sports are hardly surprising. The attentive observer of the European Track and Field Championships last year in Munich will have noticed that Switzerland, with about 9 million inhabitants, was more successful than ever before with six medals and numerous finalists.

More Exercise during Growth

As Sports physicians, we must repeatedly emphasize the importance of exercise and sports and the numerous positive aspects, especially during childhood and adolescence (5) and demand that the State governments increasingly include these important contents in educational programs.

The present issue of the Journal deals with the problematics of the Corona-related reduction of physical activity. Ms Kalski and the team in Berlin describe sports behavior during this period among 9 to 20-year-olds. The article by Joost and colleagues addresses an orthopedic problem. The phenomenon of spondylolisthesis can lead to instability to various degrees. A functional NMR can be helpful in the assessment of such cases. Müller's team addresses the

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possibilities of treating hypertension with exercise, nutrition and medication as part of the sports-medical checklists. ■

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