

# Health Advantages of Playing Sports

Last Updated: Feb 18, 2014 | By Meredith Crilly

While the benefits of playing sports are highly promoted for children and teenagers, participating in sports can improve your health throughout your life. You can improve your general fitness through a variety of physical activities, but sports offer unique benefits, whether you're joining a team in elementary school or playing in an adult league.

## Emotional and Mental Health

Improving at a sport requires memorization, repetition and learning, and honing these skill sets can carry over into other activities, including your job. Playing a sport also boosts self-esteem. Watching hard work rewarded with improved abilities and better results in competitions proves that you can set goals and achieve them. Additionally, regularly playing a sport cuts down on pressure and stress. Exercising is a natural way to release stress, and having teammates can provide a support system that also can alleviate tension.

## Weight Control

Regular physical activity throughout your lifetime can help you control your weight. While you can achieve weight control with solo activities at a gym, playing a sport can motivate you to be more physically active and to push yourself to achieve. Having your team depend on you can encourage you to show up at practices and put in a greater effort preparing for competition than you might on your own.

## Muscle and Bone Health

Sports benefit cardiovascular health. Active people have better lipid profiles, which measure fats in the blood, compared to non-sporting individuals. Also, regular physical activity improves muscle tone and helps prevent muscle wasting, which can happen to little-used muscles. Finally, playing sports decreases the risk of osteoporosis and prevents bone loss. A 2007 study published in the "British Journal of Sports Medicine" looked at tennis players over time to determine physical characteristics. Older adults, even those who no longer played tennis regularly, had less bone mineral loss because of their activity in sports.

## Improved Quality of Life

Studies have demonstrated a clear benefit in senior citizens who played sports in their teenage years. A 2013 study published by BMC Public Health re-examined World War II veterans 50 years after initial testing. Those who had played varsity high school sports reported having fewer doctor visits per year. These men also were more likely to be active into their late 70s and to experience greater independence and quality of life, although not all of them had continued to play sports throughout their adult lives.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/31907-sports-advantages-health/>