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Sport over screens: New program to get teens active

A new report from VicHealth has shown teenagers are struggling to do even an hour of physical activity a day and are almost five times more likely to be on their smartphone or tablet than being active.

The report highlights 92 percent of teenagers aren't meeting the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines of an hour of physical activity every day. In contrast the average teenager spends more than three hours a day on screens like smart phones and ipads.

In response the health promotion body has announced up to \$6million in new funding over three years to get teens moving as part of its [Growing Participation in Sport program](#).

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said teenagers often dropped out of sport because it stops being fun and starts being competitive.

"Health experts are warning that our kids could be the first generation with lower life-expectancy than their parents. Low levels of physical activity are a key driver of this change," Ms Rechter said.

"Playing sport is a really fun and social way for our kids to keep active, but we know that sport participation halves when they hit their teenage years.

"Many teenagers have told us that they stopped playing sport because it stopped being fun. Other reasons include too much focus on the competition and skill level and teenagers having to juggle other commitments like their academic performance, part-time work and social lives.

"The way sport is traditionally offered isn't what many teenagers are wanting. We want to work together with sporting organisations to get more teenagers across the state active and healthy through sport."

Ms Rechter said the program would address findings in the report to provide sport programs for teens that are fun, social and less competitive.

"Being a teenager can be really stressful, particularly having to juggle increasing pressures at school with part-time jobs and being social. Sport can be a great stress reliever, but only if it's offered in a way that allows kids to enjoy it," she said.

"We want to see sport programs that are low-cost, social, and less focused on winning and being the best and more focused on having fun and building skills.

"We've had great success in the past working with sports to create social programs for adults such as Rock Up Netball, Social Sixes cricket and hockey's J-Ball.

"We're really excited to now be working with national and state sporting organisations to deliver new sport participation opportunities that we hope will get less active teenagers active, healthy and having a great time."

Media Contact

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More information about the Growing Participation in Sport program is available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sport-participation-funding

Notes to editors:

THE FACTS ON TEENAGERS AND SPORT

- Nine out of ten teenagers are doing less than 60 minutes of exercise each day
- Teenagers are almost five times more likely to be using a screen device than being active – teenagers 15 to 17 years spend around 40 minutes a day being active and around 180 minutes doing screen-based activities, like watching tv or using their smartphones
- Sport participation halves at around age 15
- Almost half of children under 15 play no sport at all (outside of school hours) during a typical week.

Why teens stop playing sport:

- Too much focus on winning and being skilful
- Needing too much time, financial resources or family support to play
- Having to prove themselves and try out for limited places on a sports team
- Pressure to perform on the sports field
- Competing priorities including academic performance, part-time work, social activities and screen-time.

Why teens want to play sport:

- Having fun
- Getting active and improving fitness
- Learning new skills
- Being social and making new friends
- Trying new things
- Stress relief

To download the full report visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sport-participation-funding

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