

# What Are the Benefits of Competitive Sports for Youth?

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## Negatives of Competitive Sports

by T. MARICE HUGGINS Last Updated: Aug 23, 2015



Participation in competitive sports has long been a staple of high school culture. Not only does it help kids stay in shape, learn focus and socialize but it also teaches them about working under pressure. Competition is about challenging yourself to improve. But the world of competitive sports also has a negative side. If not monitored, competitive sports can harm athletes physiologically, socially and physically.

### Building Pressure

Competitive sports improve athletic skill and teach players how to work with teammates and win, which can be helpful lessons. When the focus shifts from athleticism to winning, however, what was once an enjoyable and supportive activity can turn into a high-pressure and anxiety-filled job for a child. The mounting pressure to play well can increase stress and make children feel bad and lose confidence should they make mistakes or lose. Even players who win most of the time may lose the pleasure of participating because of the pressure they place on themselves.

### Increasing Risk of Injuries

According to Science Daily, competitive success that leads to extra hours of training and practice increases the risk of burnout and overuse injuries. One study concluded that overuse injuries account for 50 percent of all reported sports injuries. The risk of injuries during competition may also rise. The intensity of competitive games can lead players to disregard rules, increasing opportunities for torn ligaments, muscle aches and other injuries.

### Confusing Commitment with Exclusivity

Although learning the importance of focus can benefit players of competitive sports, this lesson can take a negative turn in children who become unwilling to participate in activities other than their sport of choice. Because of the dedication and time required to perfect the skills that contribute to winning, players may lose the desire to do anything else because it pales in comparison to practicing and playing. Such extreme levels of exclusivity can be detrimental because they limit sports players' abilities to practice moderation, broaden their horizons and become well-rounded student-athletes.

### Developing Poor Attitude

Winning is always one of the main objective of sports competitions. Coaches spend tremendous amounts of time perfecting drills and shaping their plays to give players a competitive edge. If not monitored, the drive to win can

soon change to a win-at-all-costs mentality that can lead to attitude problems. The attitude that you must win can encourage cheating and difficulty getting along with others on and off the field

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### Overview

Any parent knows that young children are filled with energy, eager to run, jump and play. Transferring that natural energy to competitive sports can help keep kids active and healthy as they grow, and other distractions increase that may lead to a more sedentary lifestyle. Competitive sports such as soccer, track, basketball and swimming can also help kids learn important life lessons about teamwork and fair play.

### Learning How to Compete



Playing sports can help kids understand how competition works in a friendly environment. Photo Credit Seiya Kawamoto/Photodisc/Getty Images

Participating in sports teaches children and teenagers how to compete in the real world. As they grow older they'll face competition in school, in the workforce and other areas of life. But these competitions don't have to be negative or unhealthy. Playing sports can help kids understand how competition works in a friendly environment, and that if you try your hardest, you have a better chance to succeed.

### Understanding the Value of Exercise



Participating in competitive youth sports burns calories and helps to prevent obesity. Photo Credit Jupiterimages/Stockbyte/Getty Images

Millions of American children and teenagers are overweight. This obesity epidemic has made the early onset of health problems such as diabetes more common. Participating in competitive youth sports burns calories and helps to prevent obesity. Additionally, many children who are active in sports are motivated to eat healthier foods, such as fruits and vegetables.

### Improving Self-Esteem



Improved self-esteem is another benefit of competitive youth sports. Photo Credit Jupiterimages/Stockbyte/Getty Images

Improved self-esteem is another benefit of competitive youth sports. When a child wins a game with his team, he feels accomplished and recognized. Even when he doesn't win, he can learn a valuable lesson: that you can't win every time. Losing with his team can also increase self-esteem, as he learns to hold his head high and feel proud for trying his best.

## **Decreasing Risky Behavior**

According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, youth sports can help deter negative behavior, such as joining a gang, because competitive sports provide an outlet for expression, friendship and controlled aggression. Teens who have positive influences and friends feel less of a need to participate in risky behaviors.

