

LIFETIME SPORTS

STARTING GOOD HABITS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES



Research has shown that there are risks involved in specializing in one sport too early, or before the age of 14. In addition to a higher risk for injuries, athletes who specialize too early are more likely to burn out and quit sports. This is a serious concern for long-term health as we know physical fitness and activity are important for wellness.

Philip L. Wilson, M.D., an assistant chief of staff and pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Scottish Rite for Children, has dedicated his career to caring for young athletes, studying conditions that affect them and teaching future health care professionals about their unique needs and treatments. He shares his thoughts on lifetime sports, including how coaches and parents can keep young athletes engaged by diversifying their activities.

WHAT IS A LIFETIME SPORT?

A lifetime sport is an activity or sport that is enjoyable throughout your life. You can do these activities with a variety of people without being dependent on a team. It fits within any lifestyle, and you're not forced to schedule around it.

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM CROSS-TRAINING?

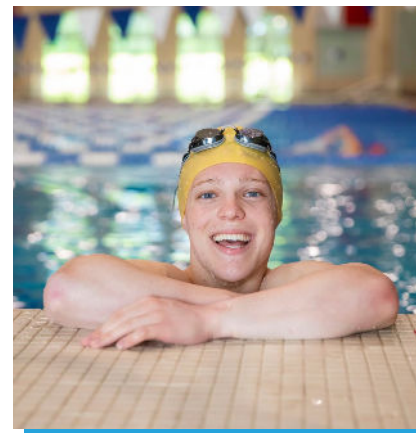
It depends on what is motivating you. If you're focused on cross-training to get better for your primary sport, you may not stick with the activity for a long time. If you're participating in a wide variety of activities to promote general health and well-being, I think you're more likely to continue.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF LIFETIME SPORTS?

Hiking, tennis, golf, swimming, jogging, walking, pickleball and bicycling

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO ENCOURAGE THESE ACTIVITIES?

- Leave time in the schedule for physical activities.
- Ask your kids what they would like to do.
- Lead by example. Show them that being active is a way of life.



WHAT COULD MOTIVATE KIDS TO BECOME LIFETIME ATHLETES?

You should create a variety of opportunities for them to develop an interest in being active. I think of activities like taking a walk in a nature preserve, taking advantage of your city's jogging trails, trying out different playgrounds or checking out the local climbing gym. The options are endless when combining activities and the outdoors.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In my career, I've seen some athletes continue in their primary sport for a long time. I've also seen many give up for one reason or another. It's a tough transition, going from being a dedicated athlete to "real life" activities. I believe that those who are well-rounded and have learned the long-term values of sport and fitness will be healthy adults. They will understand the values of maintaining an active lifestyle.

This material is for educational use. Discuss any questions with your health care provider.

