

**3° Jornadas Nacionales de actividad física
y deportiva en el niño y el adolescente
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Sede: Centro de Docencia y Capacitación Pediátrica "Dr. Carlos A. Gianantonio"

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Autor: Prof. Neil Armstrong

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Physical activity consists of behaviours which contribute to total energy expenditure and involve bodily movements produced by skeletal muscles. In the context of young people's health and well-being habitual physical activity is the behaviour of prime interest. Habitual physical activity has been defined as, 'usual physical activity carried out in normal daily life in every domain and any dimension'. Low levels of habitual physical activity are a major issue in the promotion of youth health and well-being. Young people's physical activity patterns are different from those of adults due to psychological, physiological and biomechanical changes during growth and maturation and socio-cultural differences in lifestyles. Estimates of how many children are active are clouded by the limitations of current methods of assessing and interpreting habitual physical activity. No single method of measurement adequately describes all aspects of habitual physical activity and all current measurement instruments have deficiencies. Expert committees have produced physical activity guidelines for youth but they are evidence-informed rather than evidence-based. Physical activity patterns are sporadic and sustained periods of moderate or vigorous physical activity are not characteristic of young people's habitual physical activity. In their daily lives young people very rarely experience physical activity of the intensity and duration to enhance physical fitness. If additional insights into health-related physical activity are to be gained methods of assessment need to be refined and physical activity guidelines re-visited in relation to the extant evidence base. This presentation will critically analyse what we know about young people's habitual physical activity in relation to age and gender, examine secular changes in physical activity and comment on the relationship between physical activity and physical fitness during childhood and adolescence.