

Exercise is crucial to help school children's brain power

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Expert from universities including Birmingham, Chester, London and Exeter, agreed 21 separate findings about the power of physical activity for children

Exercise helps children do better at school, experts have said. Allowing kids time away from the classroom to run around boosts their brain power, according to the team of international researchers.

A consensus statement signed by 24 researchers from eight countries, including the UK, says exercise is vital to children's physical and mental health and improves academic results.

Published online in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, the statement says "time taken away from academic lessons in favour of physical activity has been shown to not come at the cost of scholastic performance".

It adds that "physical activity and cardiorespiratory fitness are beneficial to brain structure, brain function and cognition" and "physical activity before, during and after school promotes scholastic performance in children and youth".

Just a single session of moderate exercise has been shown to have an "acute benefit" on brain function, cognition and

academic performance in children, while there are also many benefits in terms of mental health, the statement added. Self-esteem as well as relationships with other children, parents and teachers are enhanced by the benefits of exercise, which also promotes social inclusion.

Furthermore, sports and physical activity programmes that follow a plan or a curriculum help children develop life skills such as being able to moderate one's own behaviour, as well as teaching values such as respect, the statement said. The statement was agreed by experts including from the UK, Scandinavia, and North America.

It looked at both structured physical activity and more unstructured forms - such as free play - on the health of children aged six to 18.

One section points to the physical benefits of exercise for children, such as reducing the risk of heart disease and diabetes in adulthood, adding that "physical activity is important in the treatment of many chronic diseases in children and youth".

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/exercise-crucial-help-school-childrens-8298521>