

Study: Physical activity helps kids think better

By Deborah Netburn, Los Angeles Times

Here's another reason to get your kids off the couch and make them run around instead: It will help them think better.

In a paper published in *Pediatrics*, researchers report that kids 7 to 9 years old who attended a daily, after-school fitness program showed an increased ability to pay attention, avoid distraction and switch between tasks at the end of a nine-month period, compared with a control group that did not attend the program.

"Our study shows that brain activation was different in the 'FIT Kids' group compared to a control group," said Charles Hillman, a professor of kinesiology and community health at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and lead author of the paper.

The study involved 222 elementary-school-aged children. Half of them were accepted to a free fitness program called "FIT Kids" (for "Fitness Improves Thinking") that met daily after school on the campus of the University of Illinois. The other half were put on a wait list for the program, and were used as a control group.

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