

India's Generation Next displays alarming lack of fitness even as general awareness on fitness marks an upward trend

The 4th edition of the Edusports Annual School Health and Fitness Survey covering 77,669 children in 176 schools across India revealed that a majority of school going children possess undesirable Body Mass Index (BMI) levels

Key findings:-

- *2 in 5 kids don't have the right BMI levels*
- *1 in 2 kids don't possess adequate upper-body or lower body strength*
- *1 in 2 kids don't possess the desired flexibility*

Bangalore, 27 November 2013 – Regardless of age group, gender, region or city type, the current generation of school going children in India face an unhealthy future. This trend was made apparent in the **2013 Edusports Annual School Health and Fitness survey**. This is the country's only and most comprehensive survey on the health and fitness of Urban India's school going children, conducted by EduSports, India's largest school sports and Physical Education Company. This year's study covered 77,669 children in the age group of 7-17 years from 176 schools in 68 cities and 17 states. The fitness parameters that were measured over a period of 24 months included anaerobic capacity, flexibility, lower and upper body strength, abdominal strength and Body Mass Index (BMI).

Girls score higher than boys in terms of BMI scores

In a comparative study between boys and girls it was found that 66% of girls have healthy BMI scores compared to 59 % of boys. The primary causes for higher BMI are sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy eating habits and little or no play. High Body Mass Index is a direct indicator of the onset of obesity, which can lead to several health problems including type2 diabetes, heart ailments and high blood pressure as early as adolescence. However, girls score lower than boys in other fitness parameters (anaerobic capacity, flexibility, upper body strength and abdominal strength), which is indicative that they are still short on overall fitness.

Children in all regions show alarming fitness levels

Geographically, children in all five regions of the country were deemed equally unfit with unhealthy BMI scores of 37% (Central), 39% (East and North), 37% (South) and 38% (West). The weighted scores for these regions across all fitness parameters do not vary a lot, which reinforces the view that children all across the country show an alarming lack of fitness.

Non-metros score higher than metros in terms of BMI levels and fitness parameters

Children in non-metros (44,560 children in 84 schools) performed marginally higher than their counterparts in 6 metro cities (33,109 children in 92 schools) in 4 of the 6 fitness parameters. Additionally, children in non-metros demonstrated better flexibility (51% in non-metros and 49% in metros), had good upper body strength (54% in non-metros and 51% in metros) and a higher overall BMI score (63% in non-metros and 61% in metros).

Declining fitness levels even as general awareness of fitness is gaining momentum

Research shows that though awareness and spends on fitness, especially among the young corporate segment are seeing an upward trend, it does not translate into better fitness levels of children. Unhealthy urban lifestyles are taking a toll on children's physical performance and health

across all ages. Thanks to conveniences and abundant choices available to children these days, there is a heightened reduction in physical activity (for example, children take the bike to the local shop instead of walking). Food consumption patterns are also moving towards processed, fast foods which prove to be unhealthy in the long term, leading to critical health issues like childhood obesity and poor health. Another worrying trend is the emergence of virtual gaming which is eating away valuable play time. Children spend less time outdoors and indulge in little or no physical activities/play.

Schools provide the best environment for timely intervention

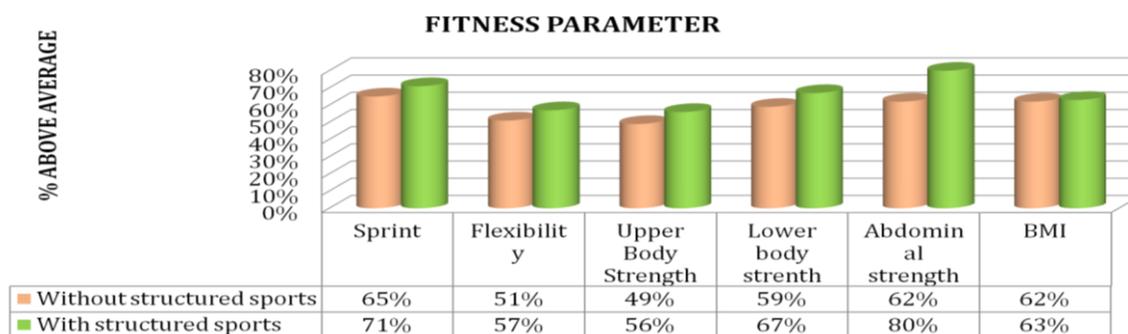
Due to modernization and urban lifestyles, space and time to indulge in sports/play is now at a premium. Unless there is timely intervention in terms of exercise or play, fitness will take a backseat. In the current scenario, schools provide the best environment for providing effective intervention as children spend more time in school than at home. Schools have a clear advantage over the home environment, clubs or academies when it comes to providing necessary resources like safety compliant infrastructure, trained teachers, a dedicated time for sports and a healthy environment to build team spirit and competition.

So is there a solution?

It is a well established fact that a structured approach to learning is one of the biggest reasons for our academic system to succeed. It helps the teacher know what message to impart to the students and ensures age-appropriate training. A similar age-appropriate approach to structuring a school sports curriculum is bound to reap benefits in the areas of physical fitness and health of children.

A structured sports/ PE program helps improve fitness parameters

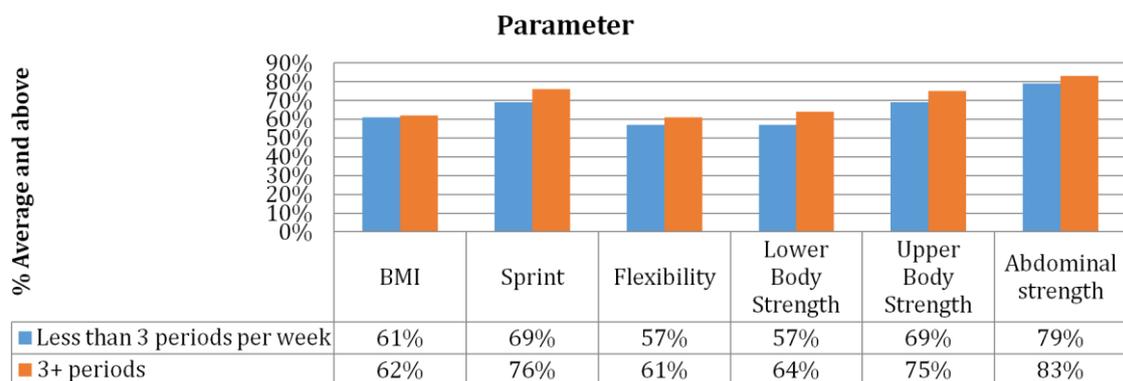
To determine and compare the effects of running a structured sports/ PE programme in a school vs a school which lacked a structured sports programme or ran a general sports programme, Edusports conducted a controlled group study where 27,381 kids from 56 schools in 34 cities went through a structured sports programme over 24 months and experienced 2-4 sessions of structured sports/physical activity per week. The results were compared with schools running a general sports programme (31,594 kids from 76 schools in 42 cities). The results were heartening, to say the least. Schools which followed structured play showed a significant improvement across fitness parameters.



Positive impact of sports - Schools which provide more playtime, produce fitter kids

An often asked question is whether children get enough playtime in school? On an average, schools usually provide 2 PE periods. Edusports' research data proves that schools which provide 3 or more PE sessions per week produce fitter children. To support this premise, a survey was conducted among 41,068 children from 111 schools across 52 cities which were running a structured sports programme for a period of 9 months. The study compared schools which allow more than 3 PE

periods per week with those that allow lesser periods. The results showed that children who had 3 or more PE periods a week scored higher on all fitness parameters.



***Scores indicate % students who scored average or above average in each parameter**

Speaking on the 4th edition of this landmark survey, Mr. Saumil Majumdar, CEO & Co-founder, EduSports, said, “For the fourth consecutive year, we would like to reiterate that a structured sports programme is the way forward if any change in the fitness levels of the new generation are to be dreamt of. It is disheartening to witness an ‘unhealthy generation’ that is otherwise ahead of its times. The alarming fitness standards that have emerged in our annual study, yet again prove that physical activity/sports in schools should be viewed as an important part of the curriculum for the overall development of a child. We encourage schools to increase their PE periods to ensure that their sports programmes are more effective resulting in a greater probability of healthier children.”

About EduSports:

Winner of a number of industry awards (NDTV- Marks for Sports ‘Spirit of Sports’ 2012 and Sankalp Awards 2012 for education and vocational training), EduSports is India’s first and largest Physical Education (PE) & School Sports enterprise. EduSports partners with schools across the country to help them develop healthier and fitter children via the medium of sports/physical activity. EduSports designs and administers a sports curriculum for K-12 schools. The EduSports school sports programme has been designed by a distinguished panel of advisors comprising of leading sports psychologists, educationists, and sports professionals with vast experience of working with K-12 schools. Currently, EduSports is working with over 330 schools and covers more than 200,000 children in more than 80 cities all over India. More information about EduSports can be had at www.edusports.in