

Strength training for children and adolescents – investing in the future

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Today's young adults are the first generation ever to do less physical exercise than the biological minimum required for good health and the situation is worse still in the next generation, in today's children and adolescents.

Taller, heavier and weaker

Studies have shown that on average children and adolescents today are 5 centimetres taller and 3 – 4 kilograms heavier compared with the average measured in 1965. In addition, their physical capacity, i.e. endurance, strength, speed and mobility declined on average by 10 % between 1975 and 2000. In some age groups, the decline was as much as 25 % (Bös, K.: Motor function of children and adolescents. First Sports Report on German Children and Adolescents (2003): Pages 85-107).

Effects on health

Children and adolescents are now starting to develop diseases associated with modern civilisation. For example, musculoskeletal problems such as back, knee or hip pain are no longer uncommon in young people. Often, functional disorders go hand in hand with obesity. Physical inactivity and very high levels of body fat are contributing to the increased incidence of metabolic disorders such as adult-onset diabetes (Type II diabetes mellitus). In recent years, the disease, previously rare in children has become much more common and this is a phenomenon seen in almost all developed countries. The increase in the percentage of overweight children is presenting these countries with an epidemiological problem, which will be extremely expensive, particularly in the long term.

Strength training for the young – what to bear in mind

Physical activity in childhood and adolescence creates a base for fitness and health in later life. Health-oriented strength training, alongside school or club sports and other active leisure pursuits, helps to offset the lack of exercise taken by today's youngsters. It supports the growth process and can prevent or reduce malformations or distortions of the musculoskeletal system.

When strength training is done by youngsters, the following should be borne in mind:

- Introduction should be given by a competent instructor
- During training, the focus should be on doing exercises correctly and getting the rhythm right
- Maximum possible weights should be avoided. Both intensity and weight should be moderate and only increased gradually
- The exercises should be varied in order to maintain interest.

Bei Kieser Training wird das Trainingsprogramm auf The training programmes offered by Kieser Training are geared to the needs and ability of the child or adolescent. Its medical evaluation guarantees a safe introduction to training. In the event of pre-existing problems, the doctor can modify the content of a programme or the way an exercise is done. Regular check sessions are provided to monitor not just the quality of the exercises but also the machine settings, as they can change rapidly when children are growing.

However, there is one physical restriction: The child or adolescent must be at least 1.50 metres tall to be able to use the Kieser Training machines.

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