


# Many children not getting enough exercise: study

 **REUTERS** updated 4/13/2011 4:14:32 PM ET

NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - Many American youngsters are not getting enough physical activity and parents are failing to make their children's health a priority, according to a new study.

The research by the YMCA, which surveyed more than 1,600 American parents with children between the ages of 5 and 10, showed that 58 percent of children spend less than four days a week playing outside because parents find it more convenient to spend time in front of a television or computer.

"There are many small things that make it very difficult for families to get an hour of physical [activity](#) a day," said Dr. Matt Longjohn, the YMCA's US Director of Chronic Disease Prevention. "Among the factors you could blame are technology, time and money."

More than half of parents said that the need to save money in economically stressed times had forced them to cut back on extracurricular [activities](#) for their children.

"Getting 60 minutes of [exercise](#) doesn't have to just come from sports or things that cost money," Dr. Longjohn said. "It could be taking a walk, or choosing to walk up stairs instead of taking an elevator, for example. It doesn't have to be organized."

He added that parents shouldn't have to look for a one-hour chunk of time.

"It can be smaller opportunities, minutes that can add up to preventing a disease," he added.

The study also found that technological innovations - such as social networking sites and smart phones - are distracting children from playing, although 52 percent of parents said they spend time with their children on things such as video games.

Longjohn suggested that parents find ways to limit time children spend on sedentary activities such as watching television.

"Parents need to get creative on setting limits on screen time," he said. "That means putting their family into environments that create those opportunities for physical activity."

But despite the problems highlighted by the study, there is still reason to be optimistic about [children's health](#), according to Longjohn.

"National initiatives such as the First Lady's campaign have brought awareness to this effort and community efforts have started to change the conversations in living rooms," he said.

"If we're vigilant as a country to keep our eyes on the ball here and continue to support health and incorporate healthy routines, there is no reason not to be optimistic."