

Active Gaming — Physical Activity Video Games

Many people find it hard to be active and you may be one of them. Some video game companies want to help people increase their activity and many of them are involved in making active gaming systems. “Gaming” is the term that includes computer or video type games. Active gaming is where your body’s actions match characters on the screen. Many reports indicate that people are not active and it is no surprise that there is research on active gaming. Research shows that active games increase activity levels and the number of calories burned for all ages when compared to screen time.

Many gaming systems offer active games. Each gaming system has its own set of active games. Most systems offer games that vary in intensity. Less intense games involve stretching and flexibility type exercises. More intense games involve sports such as tennis or skiing. These active games can help less active children, adults and seniors move more.

Studies show active gaming can help “couch potatoes” be more active. Most of these games do not offer the same health benefits as walking. However, you burn more calories playing active games than you would watching television or sitting to play a video game. Many youth and adults think active gaming is more fun than walking. This may mean that people may play active games more often than they would walk.

Researchers found the level of the game is related to the number of calories burned. For example, the more advanced games burned more calories than the less advanced ones. One study found when there was a contest in the game where two people competed, the game was found to be more intense and more calories were burned.

Children can benefit from active games. Leaner children are more likely to play active games. Overweight or obese children enjoy active and passive games equally. It is not surprising children move more than adults when playing active games. Active games may prompt children to move more.

Injuries from active games are different from those experienced from playing the actual sport. Some people have reported minor injuries from playing active games. Most injuries occurred because people played the same game too often and too long. Some injuries occurred because the player lacked the skills needed to play the game. An example would be

incorrectly “swinging” a tennis racket or baseball bat. Playing a variety of games may help a person stay injury free.

Active gaming does not provide all of the benefits of playing the actual sport. It does provide options for people who are not very active, who have no safe space to be active or who want a rainy day activity. You can burn more calories by competing with another person. If you play active games often, you can avoid injury risk by not playing games with similar motions for long periods of time.

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