

Playing Soccer is a Smart Choice!

By: Greg Smith, Ph.D. and Dr. Stacy King, PT, DPT, OCS, CIMT, CSCS

Every year, millions of children across America play soccer. There are also hundreds of thousands of coaches, referees, and administrators who participate to make the various programmatic opportunities available at the local, club, and league levels.

With only needing a ball and a few friends to play, in addition to the fact that it is fun to play regardless of one's height, strength, or speed, it is no wonder that soccer is the most popular game in the world.

As the United States, Canada, and Mexico have jointly been selected to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, excitement for soccer will continue to grow in America.

Playing the beautiful game of soccer offers many benefits ranging from psychological, physical, and social, in addition to being fun!

Psychological- The more you move, the better you feel. Why? There are naturally occurring chemicals that are released when exercising that make you feel good. Playing soccer releases these chemicals which can help to improve mood, reduce stress, and decrease anxiety. Did you also know that playing soccer can help to improve one's confidence, attention, self-esteem, memory, and learning capacity? Working through setbacks on the field teaches players that they can overcome challenges. These are all critical skills that set players up for future success in life.



Physical- Playing soccer improves one's endurance and cardiovascular health as running on the field challenges the heart and lungs to work harder and get stronger. In addition to running, other aspects of the game such as kicking and jumping helps to strengthen muscles and bones while improving flexibility. The more you move around, the more calories you burn. If you are eating a healthy balanced diet full of lean protein, fruits, and veggies while keeping sugar and processed foods to a minimum, soccer can also help maintain a healthy weight. Children benefit from burning energy in a safe, structured, and positive way. Soccer allows them to do so while establishing a sense of belonging and identity that is so important.



Social- Soccer teaches players how to work together as a team while enforcing the values of hard work, dedication, and commitment. Playing soccer helps to build character and develop coping skills. Learning to win and lose gracefully is a skill that everyone can use. Additionally, learning how to respect all players breaks down barriers and fosters a sense of belonging. These are skills that will stay with people for their entire life and will help them to succeed long after they hang up their cleats.



Parents and guardians have choices when it comes to choosing an activity for their children. While many team sports offer some of the benefits noted, soccer is by far the best choice when all things are considered.



The Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA), in conjunction with our amazing affiliates, proudly offers soccer programming to meet every budget and every ability level. No matter where you live within Maryland and the District of Columbia, chances are that there is at least one MSYSA Affiliate within a few minutes' drive of your house. Visit msysa.org to search for soccer clubs by zip code.



MSYSA, in addition to many of our affiliates, offers scholarships to help cover the cost of participation. So, if you have never given soccer a try, or perhaps it has been a few years since you last played, then we challenge you to get back in the game this year. We are confident that you will have an amazing experience and that you will want to continue playing for years to come!

Please visit msysa.org to learn more.

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