

Sports, Recreation and Fitness for People With Disabilities

What is meant by adapted sports?

Adapted sports are sporting games in which the equipment and rules are adapted just enough to allow individuals with disabilities to participate, without changing the integrity of the game.

What are the benefits of being physically active?

Participating in physical activities - sports, recreation or fitness - is beneficial for anyone. This is particularly true for people with disabilities. In general, people with disabilities are less active and this can lead to weight gain and other health problems. Participating in physical activities boosts self-esteem, confidence, and body image, increases independence, improves cardiovascular and muscle endurance, and assists in weight management. It also provides an opportunity to build friendships with other people with disabilities.

There are four levels of competition.

Recreation

At this level, participating in physical activity such as swimming, canoeing, playing catch, is primarily for enjoyment.

Recreation/Competitive

Participants are involved primarily for recreation, but there is a competitive aspect involved. Sports might include bowling or playing golf and keeping score.

Competitive Recreation

Participants at this level are competitive. They would be active in high school sports, city leagues and tournament teams.

Elite Competitive

Competing at this level involves serious training and commitment. Athletes are willing to alter their lifestyle in order to compete in events such as the Olympics, Paralympics, or professional sports.

How can I get involved in sports programs?

School programs for adolescents

School districts across the state, including several within the metro area, have adapted sports teams. There are two divisions of teams, the MH (mentally handicapped) division and the POHI (physical or other health impairments) division. In 1994, the State High School Athletic Association agreed to sanction the adapted programs. This means that adolescents with disabilities can participate in sports, play in tournaments and even earn their high school letters. Contact your district athletic department for information.

Specialty programs for people with disabilities

Gillette can refer you to a wide variety of specialty programs and adapted sports, including wheelchair basketball, archery, softball, swim teams, horseback riding and camps. These programs offer the opportunity for recreation and sport. They also provide opportunity for camaraderie with other people with disabilities.

Community park and recreation programs

Programs include people with disabilities in sports and recreation programs with able-bodied peers in their home community. We can assist you, as well as park and recreation staff in adapting programs to meet your needs.

Whether becoming active means playing catch or competing on a sports team, activity will make you feel better and it is a great way to build friendships.

Therapeutic Recreation Services at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare promotes participation in sports and recreation activities by young people with disabilities. This is accomplished through education, injury prevention, rehabilitation of sports injuries and research. For more information, contact Therapeutic Recreation at 651-229-3855.

[Make An Appointment](#) [651-290-8707](tel:651-290-8707)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](tel:651-229-3890).