

To exercise or not to exercise?

Which young person or people:

- had been overweight since he/she were very young? (1) _____
- mentions that some young people know it's important to have a healthy lifestyle? (2)_____
- say they take plenty of exercise? (3)___ (4)___
- is going to change their habits? (5) _____
- say computer games are enjoyable? (6) ___ (7) ____
- accuse family and educational system of the obesity problem? (8)_____
- has changed their lifestyle to keep in good shape? (9) _____

Are more young people overweight than in the past and do they exercise enough? We decided to ask four young people what they thought about this problem.

A Heather, aged 14, tells us what she thinks about keeping fit. 'I know there have been a lot of stories in newspapers about how fat young people are getting, but we're not all sitting at home at a computer eating crisps and chocolate. Some of us do actually realise that keeping fit is quite important. If anybody should be blamed, I think schools and parents are the problem. At my school we have fewer hours of PE lessons than we used to have. The school has decided we need to spend more time preparing for our exams. My mum and dad trust me to take a bus home if I stay late at school for hockey training, which is almost every day, but my friend Carly can't come because her parents work and they are worried about her travelling alone.'

B Oliver, aged 15, sees things differently. 'I don't like organised sport or spending my time with guys skateboarding. I love computers — programming them, playing games on them, surfing the Internet and in my free time that's what I do. It's true that I need to lose some weight, though. Next week, Mum's taking me to a doctor so we can ask about going on a diet. Dad wants me to join the gym he goes to, but I think it's a bit boring working out all the time. In fact, there's a computer game now called Wii. I'm thinking of getting it because you actually do the actions of the games — you know, things like swinging your arm to hit the ball in tennis. That'd be a good way to get some exercise!'

C Reece, aged 13, has another view. 'I'm an active person and so are most of my friends. We all like spending some time on our Nintendos, PlayStations or whatever — all young people enjoy computer games — but we also belong to football teams or some kind of sports club as many teens love active games as well. Our problem is that we eat too much rubbish. In fact, we drink a lot of bad things — sweet, fizzy drinks which are full of sugar and very unhealthy. Also, we all love tasty food and often eat hamburgers and chips. If we ate better, I think most of us would lose the extra weight we have.'

D Hank, aged 14, shares his opinions with us. 'I've spent the last four years trying to lose weight, and it hasn't been easy. My problem started when I was a baby — it wasn't my fault. You see, I wasn't very interested in food, and so my mum made all kinds of delicious things to get me to eat. Of course, all those tasty foods were very fattening. My mum used to carry a bowl of food everywhere we went and would follow me around the house or playground trying to get me to eat just one more bite. Well, I got used to eating constantly and, by the time we all realised that I had gained too much weight, the damage had been done. Now I follow a special diet — it was hard at first, but once I got used to it, I actually like it. And I look and feel so much better — I don't want to go back to the way I was.'