"Kids in the US don't exercise enough," says Stan Reents, PharmD, a certified personal trainer, fitness counselor, and tennis coach. In 1969, 80 percent of kids played sports every day; today, only 20 percent do.

Can technology be used to reverse this trend? Apparently, a lot of companies think so, as the concept of "exergames" is starting to take off. Health clubs and schools are now turning to these innovative technology-driven activities to get kids moving.

"Exergames' are video games that promote exercise. 'Interactive fitness games' are technology-driven games that also promote exercise, but don't require a screen," according to Lisa Hansen, PhD candidate at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and co-director of their fitness lab.

Put a bunch of these games together in an arcade-like atmosphere and you've got "XRKade." XRKades promote a fun and social experience. "Kids focus on playing the games and don't even realize that they're exercising," says Hansen, who was a basketball player and personal trainer before entering the PhD program. Only a handful of these arcades currently exist in the US, but many more are expected to open in 2008.

To some, using technology to motivate kids to exercise might seem like feeding whiskey to an alcoholic. After all, television and video games have been identified as reasons why kids are so sedentary. But kids love games. "We have found that they never sit down when playing the various games in our XRKade lab," says Hansen.

Certainly, something needs to be done to promote exercise in kids. In most gym classes, kids are aerobically active for just 3 minutes. "Sadly, overweight and obesity and the medical problems that go with it are starting to appear in kids just like they do in adults," says Reents, a former health care professional and creator of AthleteInMe.com.

A review of many of these technology-based exercise games can be found at www.AthleteInMe.com.

About XRKade

XRKade (www.XRKade.com) is owned by iTech Fitness (www.iTechFitness.com), a Denver-based developer of exergaming, interactive fitness, and entertainment systems. XRKades can be found as a stand-alone club but more often as a club within a club concept. For more information, contact sales@itechfitness.com

About AthleteInMe.com
AthleteInMe.com is an independent web site devoted to providing high-quality information on exercise, fitness, training, sports nutrition, and fitness gear for consumers and athletes. One of the features of the site is an online fitness counseling service. For more information, contact: sales@athleteinme.com.

Note to Editors

Lisa Hansen and Stan Reents are available for interview.

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