

Health Benefits of Exercise

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LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION PROGRAMS REDUCE HEALTH CARE COSTS FOR SENIORS



A study published in the May edition of the *Journal of the American Heart Association* looked at the impact of two evidence-based intensive lifestyle change programs – involving diet, exercise, and mental health components – on the health and economic outcome of Medicare beneficiaries with heart disease. The study was conducted over an eight-year period, with each participant following a yearlong program consisting of exercise, diet, small group support, and stress reduction components. After the study period, authors concluded that hospital admissions for both cardiac and non-cardiac related events were lower in people who had participated in a program compared to those who had not, and the cost of the program was off set by a small savings in health care costs. Health clubs provide a safe, supportive environment for seniors to get active, and many clubs offer lifestyle change programs to their members.

EVIDENCE SUPPORTS EXERCISE AS A TREATMENT OF OBESITY IN SCHOOL CHILDREN

Physical activity is an important tool in preventing and treating obesity and its related disease risk factors. A recent study in the journal *Nutricion Hospitalaria* found that strength training and physical activity accompanied by a lifestyle change program helped reduce weight and other obesity risk factors among school-age children.



The study involved two groups of children: group one received education, psychosocial support – such as stress management – and strength training for 3 months while group two received only the education and psychosocial components. After 3 months, group two then received the exercise component as well. After the first 3 months, participants in group one saw significant improvements in their body mass index, waist circumference, body fat, and prevalence of metabolic syndrome, elevated blood lipids, and elevated blood glucose.

Group two saw similar results after having received the exercise program. This study suggests that strength training exercises can help reduce body fat and heart disease risk among obese children and is a useful treatment for childhood obesity. Many health clubs offer memberships and programs to help families start getting healthy.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE ON THE PREVENTION OF CANCER



Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and the disease takes many different forms. The types of cancer with the greatest impact on men's health are prostate, lung, and colorectal, while breast and colorectal cancers are the most common among women. According to the authors of the review, primary prevention and screening for early diagnosis are the best strategies for preventing cancer. Evidence suggests that the most beneficial behaviors to help prevent cancer include:

- Not smoking
- Exercising regularly
- Eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables

Health clubs provide a safe, supportive environment to start getting active. Many clubs also offer programs and resources to help people improve their diet and stay motivated to exercise regularly.

EXERCISE PROGRAMS HELP WOMEN STICK WITH FITNESS

Physical inactivity is now recognized as a risk factor for poor health, not just for obesity. A new study in the *Journal of Clinical Nutrition* looked at the impact

of a 7-week group exercise program on women's adherence to regular exercise after one year. During the study, women took 3 classes per week for a total of 21 and were followed by a nurse after six months and one year.

Results showed that, one year after the program, the percentage of women who reported following an exercise training regimen increased from 11 to 41%. Women who completed more than 14 of the 21 sessions were also more likely to adhere exercise regularly after one year. This evidence shows that constructive, group exercise programs can help women get active and continue exercising long term. Many health clubs offer structured exercise programs and/or group exercise classes.

EXERCISE AND WEIGHT LOSS CAN REDUCE CARDIAC RISK FACTORS IN OBESE OLDER ADULTS



There has been some question in the scientific community regarding whether weight loss or exercise is the best course for reducing cardiovascular risk factors in older, obese adults. A new study in the *International Journal of Obesity* followed over 100 participants in diet, exercise, and combined diet and exercise programs over one year to answer this question.

The results of the study showed that positive changes in insulin sensitivity, waist circumference, body fat, blood lipids, and blood pressure were seen in the diet and diet plus exercise group. Metabolic syndrome rates dropped 40% in the diet plus exercise group and 15% in the diet group.

This suggests that in older, obese adults, lifestyle changes associated with weight loss improved risk for symptoms of metabolic syndrome. However, continued improvement in insulin sensitivity was only achieved when exercise was part of the weight loss.

SOURCES

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