Health Benefits of Exercise

Volume 18, Issue 2

Resourcefulness, Social Connections, and Environment Key Factors in Highly Active Seniors

While exercise is an important part of managing many chronic conditions, physical activity levels often decline with age. A new article in the *Journal of Aging Studies* interviewed 27 very active older adults, and identified a few key factors that predict more activity in older age. These were:

1. Resourcefulness and engagement in self-help strategies

2. Social connections and relationships that facilitate and/or support higher levels of activity

3. A built or natural environment with adequate spaces and places that support and/or facilitate higher levels of activity

According to the authors, accessible exercise facilities with appropriate programming and policies geared towards the promotion of physical activity can contribute to more activity among older adults. Health clubs offer a safe, supportive environment for older adults to exercise and maintain social connections, and many clubs offer age-specific programming.

Exercise Can Reduce the Risk of Chronic Pain in People With Sleep Problems

New research from Norway looked at the relationship between sleep problems and chronic neck, shoulder, and back pain, and whether exercise or body mass index (BMI) had an effect on the pain. The study, published in the *European Journal of Public Health,* included data on over 26,000 people in a large health study in Norway over a 10-12 year period.

The results showed that people with sleep problems were at higher risk of neck, shoulder, and lower back pain. Specifically, people who said they had sleep problems "sometimes" were at a 23-32% higher risk of chronic pain, and people who said they had sleep problems "often" were at a 51-66% higher risk. In addition, they found that exercise could somewhat mitigate those risks. Results showed that people who exercised more than one hour per week or had a normal BMI had a lower risk of chronic back and neck pain compared to inactive people with similar sleep issues.

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Supervised Exercise Program Can Prevent Excessive Weight Gain During Pregnancy

Weight gain above recommended levels established by the Institute of Medicine can be an issue for some pregnant women. A study in the journal *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* looked at the impact of a supervised, light to moderate intensity exercise program on weight gain in over 900 healthy pregnant women. Participants performed aerobic and resistance exercises for 50-55 minutes on three days per week, while another group received normal prenatal care, which includes regular visits to healthcare provider, routine ultrasounds, and screening for blood pressure, diabetes, and other conditions that may occur during pregnancy.

The findings showed that women in the exercise group gained less weight than the women receiving normal care. The exercisers were also less likely to gain more than the recommended amount of weight compared to the other group.

Health clubs provide a safe environment, with trained staff on hand, for women to exercise while pregnant. Other studies have also shown benefits from exercising for expecting mothers.

Exercise Training Improves Several Health Variables Among People With HIV or AIDS

Research has shown that exercise can be beneficial for people with HIV or AIDS, and a new study in the *Journal of Sports Sciences* looked at the effect of a combined exercise program on several health factors among people with this condition. The program comprised aerobic and resistance training for 60 minutes three times per week for 20 weeks.

After 20 weeks, participants saw an increase in immune system strength. Improvements in lean mass, muscle strength, HDL cholesterol levels, and VO2max were also observed. The authors concluded that a program combining aerobic and resistance exercise over time can positively impact multiple health variables among people with HIV or AIDS. Health clubs provide a safe, supportive environment for people of all fitness levels to exercise.

A Review of the Impact of Exercise On Insulin Resistance Among Youth

The prevalence of obesity and diabetes has steadily increased in children. A study in the journal *Pediatrics* reviewed 24 studies to estimate the effectiveness of exercise in improving levels of fasting insulin and insulin resistance, both indicators of type 2 diabetes.

The results showed that exercise has a small to moderate effect on fasting insulin and improving insulin resistance among children and adolescents. According to the authors, these results support the use of exercise to help prevent and treat type 2 diabetes in young people.

Health clubs provide a safe, supportive environment for kids to exercise. Many clubs offer specialize programs and spaces for children to exercise through play, such as indoor basketball and racquetball courts.

SOURCES

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