



RESEARCH BRIEF

Pandemic Physical Activity

Overview

Sedentary behaviors increase the risks for chronic illnesses. Many Americans hospitalized with COVID-19 have comorbidities including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Physical activity (PA) has immediate positive effects on these conditions; direct benefit could be seen from PA as a preventive measure for COVID-19 complications.

Main Question

In the midst of the pandemic, it is more important than ever to emphasize the importance of PA and provide credible guidance for its necessity.

Study

Government leaders have recommended individuals stay in their homes and only venture out for essential activities while maintaining appropriate physical distance. Furthermore, there have been temporary closures of school campuses, exercise facilities and gyms, the suspension of sport activities and leagues, and the recommendation to avoid public recreational spaces. These COVID-19 mitigation strategies may have the unintended consequences of increasing sedentary behavior and decreasing PA to levels that yield both short- and long-term impacts on chronic disease risk, emotional health and mortality risk. Additionally, the policies put in place to curb the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated health inequalities that exist in the United States.

The Bottom Line

Now, more than ever, our nation needs to heed the call for increased PA. All sectors of society share the responsibility for PA promotion. Both amid the pandemic and in its wake, increasing individuals' PA must be approached systemically, so as to not put the burden on individual behaviors alone.



Spotlight on results

- This research calls for local solutions that impact access to healthcare, education, and PA recreation. Much like the COVID-19 pandemic, physical inactivity is a global health problem, and has been identified as the fourth leading cause of death worldwide. During the current pandemic, policy makers need to consider the potential long-term consequences of their decisions.
- Health system policy needs to support PA through the use of PA as a vital sign and exercise referrals.
- Insurance policies need to support and cover lifestyle treatments such as PA prescriptions.
- Community-based organizations and educational institutions need to provide safe opportunities for PA.

Call to Action

This is a call to action for the nation to prioritize and engage in PA promotion; for all Americans to move more and sit less throughout the day. The pandemic response must consider the balance of whole-person health including social/emotional health along with chronic and infectious diseases when deciding what is essential to human health needs.

Source

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