

EDITORIAL

ENHANCE YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: PHYSIOLOGICAL WAY TO REMAIN HEALTHY**Tehseen Iqbal**

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Human lives are becoming increasingly sedentary because of the use of motorized transport, mechanized lifestyle and the increased use of screens for work, education and recreation. There has been no improvement in global levels of physical activity since 2001. Insufficient activity increased by 5% (from 31.6% to 36.8%) in high-income countries between 2001 and 2016. The economic burden of physical inactivity is large. From an economic perspective, physical inactivity costs are as high as \$ 53.8 billion worldwide, of which Pakistan alone bears the amount of \$ 198.5 million. WHO defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. The World Health Organization recommends, for adults aged 18–64 years, to undertake i) at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity throughout the week, or ii) at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity throughout the week, or iii) perform an equivalent combination of both forms of physical activity. Regular physical activity is one of the most important things people can do to improve their health. Moving more and sitting less have tremendous benefits for everyone, regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, or current fitness level.

Keywords: Exercise, Physical Activity, Physical Inactivity, Chronic Diseases, Economic Burden

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Human lives are becoming increasingly sedentary because of the use of motorized transport, mechanized lifestyle and the increased use of screens for work, education and recreation. More than a quarter of the world's adult population (1.4 billion adults) are insufficiently active. Worldwide, around 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men do not do enough physical activity to stay healthy. Levels of inactivity are twice as high in high-income countries compared to low-income countries. There has been no improvement in global levels of physical activity since 2001. Insufficient activity increased by 5% (from 31.6% to 36.8%) in high-income countries between 2001 and 2016.¹

The term 'physical inactivity' may be defined as 'performing insufficient amounts of physical activity, that is, not meeting specified physical activity guidelines'. For instance, the World Health Organization recommends, for adults aged 18–64 years, to undertake i) at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity throughout the week, or ii) at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity throughout the week, or iii) perform an equivalent combination of both forms of physical activity.² The economic burden of physical inactivity is large. Globally, almost 500 million new cases of preventable Non Communicable Diseases (NCD) will occur between 2020 and 2030, incurring treatment costs of just over US\$ 300 billion or around US\$ 27 billion annually if there is no change in the current prevalence of physical inactivity.³ From an economic perspective, physical inactivity costs are as high as \$ 53.8 billion worldwide, of which Pakistan alone bears the amount of \$ 198.5 million.⁴

WHO defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movements including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work. Both moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity improve health.¹ Health experts state that staying active can contribute to healthy aging in older adults. Physical activity of any intensity may lower the risk of death in women older than 60, regardless of their genetic propensity for longevity.

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things people can do to improve their health. Moving more and sitting less have tremendous benefits for everyone, regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, or current fitness level. Individuals with a chronic disease or a disability benefit from regular physical activity, as do women who are pregnant. The scientific evidence continues to build physical activity is linked with even more positive health outcomes than we previously thought. And, even better, benefits can start accumulating with small amounts of, and immediately after doing, physical activity.⁵

Research shows that people who exercise regularly not only strengthen their muscles but also improve their overall health, regardless of how late in life they start. The exercise-induced changes 'reprogram' the epigenetic expression of the muscle fibers to a more youthful state.⁶

In our region men used to be more physically active as they walk distances, use bicycle for travel, do the agricultural work, keep animals for milk and other purposes, while women used to do household work

manually, do cooking for themselves, used to remain busy in sewing clothes, knitting their children's winter wear and wash clothes. In villages women also help their men at farms, bring drinkable water from wells and care and feed their cattle. All these activities are now obsolete and is replaced by machines and so physical inactivity prevail even in villages.

It is now recommended to get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity. To provide even greater health benefits, at least 300 minutes a week is recommended. But even small amounts of physical activity are helpful. Being active for short periods of time throughout the day can add up to provide health benefit. Any amount of activity is better than none at all. To reap the benefits, just get more active throughout your day. Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier, more relaxed and less anxious. Regular physical activity can improve your muscle strength and boost your endurance. It can help you fall asleep faster, get better sleep and deepen your sleep. Regular physical activity may enhance sexual arousal for women and men. Men who exercise regularly, are less likely to have problems with erectile dysfunction than are men who don't exercise.⁷

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