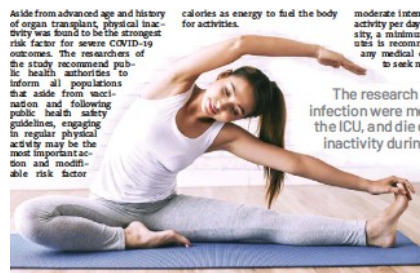


- Health

Don't be a COVID casualty—exercise!**Physical inactivity and the higher risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes**

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The global health initiative Exercise is Medicine managed by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) encourages health care professionals to include physical activity in treatment plans in order to promote optimum health. The campaign plays an integral role in preventing and treating many medical conditions.



The new kid on the block, COVID19, is no exception to the rule when it comes to using exercise as medicine in its prevention and treatment. Robert Sallis and colleagues conducted a study to compare hospitalization rates, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions, and mortality for patients infected with the virus who were consistently inactive, doing some activity, and those consistently meeting physical activity guidelines two years preceding the March 2020 pandemic.

This retrospective observational study was conducted among 48,440 COVID-19 positive adult patients at Kaiser Permanente Southern California.

The research showed that patients with COVID-19 infection were more likely to be hospitalized, admitted to the ICU, and die given the history of consistent physical inactivity during a period of two years pre-pandemic. Aside from advanced age and history of organ transplant, physical inactivity was found to be the strongest risk factor for severe COVID-19 outcomes. The researchers of the study recommend public health authorities to inform all populations that aside from vaccination and following public health safety guidelines, engaging in regular physical activity may be the most important action and modifiable risk factor that individuals can take in order to prevent severe COVID-19 outcomes, complications, and death.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that require energy expenditure. Simply put, it is any movement that helps an individual burn calories by increasing metabolism or the rate of burning calories as energy to fuel the body for activities.

Physical activity differs from exercise, although the latter is considered as a form of physical activity. Exercise is planned, structured, repetitive, and intentional movement to improve or maintain physical fitness.

If you have been living a sedentary lifestyle especially during this pandemic, it is time to get moving. The WHO recommends 150 to 300 minutes (2.5 to five hours) of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity per day. For vigorous intensity, a minimum of 75 to 150 minutes is recommended. If you have any medical conditions, it is best to seek medical advice for the physically active. We have become couch champions. Make a decision to incorporate physical activity in your daily schedule. For example, you can walk in place while watching your favorite K-drama or listening to music. You can pace while talking on the phone. If your goal is to begin with 2.5 hours of physical activity per week, 30 minutes a day of walking will help you meet your goal in five days. You get two days of rest in a week. Physical activity can be divided into cycles too. You can schedule 10 to 15 minutes of walking around your home or you can just walk in place. Repeat two to four times a day and that makes 30 minutes to an hour of physical activity in total. This is best done upon waking up, while taking a break, and at the end of a tiring workday. Enhancing your blood circulation and moving your body will be helpful in de-stressing, as well as improving your overall health. Other physical activities you can do at home include dancing, cleaning and doing housework, following exercise videos online, gardening, and anything that will make your body move.

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