

- Virus

'Exercise may help treat long Covid-induced diabetes'

The Hindu Business Line · 15 Mar 2022 · 10 · PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Exercise may lower inflammation that can lead to diabetes and depression months after a person recovers from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid, according to a study.

Researchers at Pennington Biomedical Research Center in the US noted that it is unclear how many people infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus suffer from long Covid, a constellation of other debilitating symptoms long after a person has recovered from the disease.

However, estimates range from 15 per cent to 80 per cent of the people infected with the virus suffer from the condition, they said. "We know that long Covid causes depression, and we know that it can increase blood glucose levels to the point where people develop diabetic ketoacidosis, a potentially life-threatening condition common among people with Type 1 diabetes," said Candida Rebello, a research scientist at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. "Exercise can help. Exercise takes care of the inflammation that leads to elevated blood glucose and the development and progression of diabetes and clinical depression," said Rebello.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control, long Covid is "a constellation of other debilitating symptoms", including brain fog, muscle pain and fatigue that can last for months after a person recovers from the initial infection. "For example, a person may not get very sick from Covid, but six months later, long after the cough or fever is gone, they develop diabetes," said Rebello. The study, published in the journal *Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews*, found that one solution is exercise.

Insulin sensitivity

Exercise can induce the release of circulating factors that mediate the anti-inflammatory response, support brain homeostasis, and increase insulin sensitivity, said the researchers. "You don't have to run a mile or even walk a mile at a brisk pace. Walking slowly is also exercising," said Rebello.

"Ideally, you would do a 30-minute session of exercise. But if you can only do 15 minutes at a time, try to do two 15-minute sessions," she added.

The researchers noted that even walking for 15 minutes once a day is enough to start with, adding people can gradually build up to the recommended level of exercise.

"We know that physical activity is a key component to a healthy life," said Pennington Biomedical Executive Director John Kirwan, a co-author of the research paper.

"This research shows that exercise can be used to break the chain reaction of inflammation that leads to high blood sugar levels, and then to the development or progression of type 2 diabetes," Kirwan added.