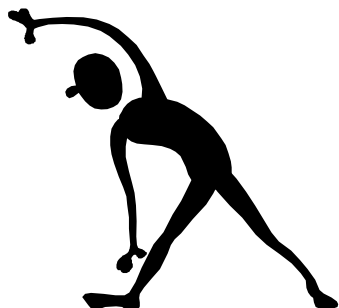


EXERCISE – WHO NEEDS IT?

Judith Clark DARM RMT SMTO

Since the early 1990's physical activity and exercise have been formally recognised as playing an important role in health improvement and disease management. Nowadays more people are aware that they should exercise but are unaware of the benefits they may gain both physically and psychologically, unfortunately often they do not realise the dangers of leading a sedentary life.



Whilst we cannot prescribe an exercise regime to our clients (unless properly trained and qualified) we should be able to recognise when a client would benefit from some form of exercise to improve their condition and well-being.

There are a vast amount of exercise classes focussing on all types of fitness from aerobics, circuits, kickboxing and aero cycle – working the cardiovascular and muscular endurance components of fitness to Pilates and Chi Ball – excellent for developing core strength and flexibility. Classes for all ages and abilities. Clubs enticing you to kite-surf or road run, cycle or self-defence – the list is endless.

Fitness professionals offer one to one training for single or block bookings and most gyms should provide a newcomer with an induction and programme to suit their needs.

I think it advisable to build up a collection of leaflets and flyers about the classes/clubs/fitness centres around your working area, but also bear in mind that exercise can also take the very pure and simple form of walking.

Anyone completely new to exercise, or with a condition that could cause concern, should consult with his or her doctor prior to starting an exercise programme.

Physical Activity is any bodily movement produced by muscles that results in energy expenditure. This includes all forms of active play, sport, dance and exercise as well as walking and cycling and routine habitual activities e.g. gardening and housework.

Exercise is planned structured physical activity that enhances aspects of physical, mental, and social health and fitness and well-being.

Fitness is a capacity or a set of attributes that individuals have or achieve that enables them to participate in and benefit from physical activity. Fitness has physical and mental dimensions.

Fitness for life, fitness for health and health related fitness all refer to the physical and mental dimensions of fitness that are considered to have implications for health, examples of the latter being reduced risk of coronary heart disease, back pain, osteoporosis, obesity, depression and anxiety. These dimensions include cardiovascular efficiency, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, body composition, composure and decision-making.

Fitness for performance and skill related fitness both refer to the physical and mental dimensions of fitness that are considered to have implications for sport performance. These dimensions include agility, balance, coordination, power, reaction time, speed, concentration and determination.

Benefits of Exercise – Physical

Cardio Vascular Health (Heart Disease)

Inactivity is one of the four main risk factors for heart disease on par with smoking, unhealthy cholesterol and high blood pressure. The myocardium becomes stronger with regular exercise and larger which makes it more efficient at pumping a greater volume of blood at each beat therefore reducing the heart rate.

Coronary Artery Disease and Cholesterol Levels

People who maintain an active lifestyle have 45% lower risk of developing coronary heart disease than do sedentary people. A recent study concluded that moderate dietary changes improve cholesterol level (so lower the risk for coronary artery disease) only when coupled with an aerobic exercise program.



High Blood Pressure

Studies indicate that regular exercise helps keep arteries elastic even in older people, which in turn keep blood flowing and blood pressure low. Sedentary people have a 35% greater risk of developing hypertension than athletes do.

Stroke

Exercise that involves recreation has been found to be more protective within a study group than exercise routine consisting simply of walking or climbing.

Heart Failure

In one study, patients between the age of 16 and 91 increased their oxygen consumption by 20% after six months, by engaging in supervised treadmill and stationary bike exercises.

Longevity and Aging

It is never too late to start exercising and even small improvements in physical fitness can significantly lower the risk of death. Resistance training is important, as it is the only form of exercise that can slow down and even reverse the decline in muscle mass, bone density and strength.

Osteoporosis

Weight bearing exercise, which applies tension to muscle and bone, encourages the body to compensate for the added stress by increasing bone density by 2% to 8% per annum. High impact weight bearing exercises are very protective for pre-menopausal women. Elderly clients, however, would benefit most from brisk long walks. Careful weight training is also beneficial.

Low impact exercises that improve balance and strength, particularly yoga and T'ai Chi, have been found to decrease the risk of falling. Some studies have shown that lower physical activity and cardio-respiratory fitness levels amplify the slowing of reactions time in older men and women. Slowing of reaction time and muscle weakness in legs has been associated with loss of postural stability and mobility in older people.

Those who live more active lifestyles show more efficient neural and contractile processes, which lead to faster reaction times.

Diabetes

Aerobic exercise is proving to have significant and particular benefits for people with both type I and type II diabetes. It increases sensitivity to insulin, lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol levels and decreases body fat.

Weight Loss

Exercise burns calories and can help individuals fight obesity. If calorie intake remains constant and exercise is added into a normally sedentary lifestyle, then weight loss will ensue. This is a fairly lengthy procedure². If coupled with a change to healthier eating habits and a drop in calorie intake then the weight will decrease. Interestingly, exercise does not increase appetite in people who want to lose weight, however, exercise does improve appetite in people who are already lean.
² As often dense muscle mass replaces fat as the body becomes more fit, the client will then see a more toned body shape but not notice much difference on the scales.

Cancer – Colon

Studies have indicated that sedentary males and females are 1.5 to 2 fold increasing their risk of colon cancer than their more active counterparts. Although the mechanism responsible for this relationship has not been specifically identified, one postulated reason is that regular exercise shortens intestinal transit time, which decreases the amount of time carcinogenic substances are in the faecal stream and in contact with intestinal/colonic tissue. Regular and moderate activity reduces the risk of colon cancer, strenuous activity, however, adds only a minimal benefit.

MESSAGE | WORLD

The Massage and Body Therapists Magazine

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

£25 for 12 issues
£20 student rate



Ph. 020 7323 5821 | Fax. 020 7637 7125
Email. massageworld@massagelondon.com
5-6 Newman Passage, London W1T 1EH

Continued on page 28

Effects on Colds and Flu

People should avoid strenuous physical activity when they have high fevers or widespread viral illness, however, if you have a cold and feel like exercising, a recent study has suggested that exercise has no effect on the illness severity or duration. Another recent study reported that people who exercised as little as once a week in employee fitness programmes averaged five fewer sick days annually than those who did not participate in the fitness programme.

Central Nervous System Diseases

Multiple Sclerosis

Exercise training has no effect on the prognosis or progression of MS. However, exercises may improve short-term physical fitness and functional performance (e.g. strength, endurance and aerobic fitness).

Preliminary data shows that after a six-month programme of moderate aerobic activity, individuals with MS may show an average aerobic fitness gain of 30%. However, there is a particularly high variability of this figure (2% to 54%).

Polio and Post Polio Syndrome

There have only been a few well-controlled prospective studies, however, they have suggested that lower extremity strength and aerobic capacity can be significantly increased in clients with PPS. Increases of 15% to 20% in aerobic capacity with the use of moderate intensity exercise after eight weeks of training. Also increases in quadriceps and hamstring strength after 6 weeks of resistance training.

Osteoarthritis

Exercise should increase the nourishment of a joint through redistribution of synovial fluid. Exercise will also help to maintain or reduce weight, which will put less strain on the joints. High impact sports should be avoided. The main types of exercise that are best for people suffering from osteoarthritis are range of motion exercises, strengthening (resistance) and aerobic such as swimming, cycling and walking. One study compared a group of patients who embarked on an aerobic and resistance exercise programme with a group that received patient education; the exercising group developed less disability and pain and showed a better ability to perform physical tasks.

Back Problems

An appropriate programme should focus on flexibility and strengthening the abdominal muscles for core stability. Yoga and Pilates are excellent as are swimming and walking.

Pregnancy

Keeping fit and healthy during pregnancy has been shown to positively contribute to easier labours. Subsequent weight loss and getting back into shape also happen more quickly. All pregnant women should avoid high impact jarring and jerky exercises, which can weaken the pelvic floor muscles. Specific exercises to strengthen pelvic muscles (Kegal exercises) should be performed every day. Ideal aerobic exercises are swimming and walking.

Psychological and Emotional Benefits

These include higher self-esteem, greater confidence, and improved mental vigour including reaction time and co-ordination skills. Either brief periods of intense training or prolonged aerobic workouts can raise levels of endorphins, adrenalin, serotonin and dopamine. These provide feelings of pleasure, which is why people say they “get a buzz” from exercise.

Why Doesn't Everyone Exercise?

The following points give an indication of the problems that “would be” exercisers give:

- Unaware of the benefits.
- Because of an illness, disease or injury.
- Physically disabled do not think that they can exercise.
- Not enough time.
- Too embarrassed to be seen going to a fitness gym.
- No encouragement from peers.
- It sounds like too much hard work – not enjoyable.
- Lack of awareness of different types of exercise e.g. from martial arts to swimming; Pilates to Aerocycle.
- Don't feel physically able.
- Lack of facilities.
- Lack of interest.
- Lack of money.

