

THE BENEFITS OF SPORTS FOR STRONG HEALTH AND MIND

Importanța sportului pentru sănătate și un psihic puternic

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Abstract

Sports are activities that have a special role for people's physical and mental health, a fact that has been acknowledged since antiquity through the dictum «Mens sana in corpore sano».

Recent studies have shown that a physical activity for at least 30 min a day has a positive effect on the physical state (strengthens the bones, muscles, heart and the whole cardio-respiratory system) but also on the mental health, greatly reducing stress, depression and anxiety levels.

Hereby, anyone can do physical activities without having to go to gym or to have a perfect physical condition. Everybody can start with some low-intensity physical activity (walking, table tennis) and once the body gets accustomed to the physical training, it will be possible to switch to higher intensity activities (jogging, dancing, outdoor sports such as tennis, football, volleyball). We are sure that once the participants realize the positive effects of sports, depending on the age, many persons will start an intensive sportive life activities including aerobics, gymnastics, swimming, bodybuilding, and for the younger ones even sports practiced at high performance levels.

Keywords: sports, health, strong psyche, diseases, aging

Introduction

Sport is defined as a physical activity that involves a methodical training, observance of certain rules and a particular discipline, based on the competitive element, pursuing the physical and mental development of the individual and obtaining performance in competitions at different levels and age categories.

Sports are activities that have a special role for people's physical and mental health, a fact that has been acknowledged since antiquity through the dictum «Mens sana in corpore sano».

Health is a very complex biopsychosocial problem, which is not the exclusive work of the medical system, thus, according to some international statistics, has only 11-12% involvement rate into its preservation, the rest being the economic and social situation of the population, water, food, living conditions, education, lifestyle etc.

Medicine has two components that affect the state of health:

1) therapy ("the art of healing diseases") and

2) prophylaxis- the set of measures designed to avoid the occurrence, worsening and spread of a disease.

The prophylaxis role has been demonstrated by recent studies done in USA, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, and has proven the axiom "it's easier and cheaper to prevent", and sport is one of the essential components of prophylaxis, which involves minimal costs and will not be conditioned by the country's technical infrastructure or technical development.

We often ponder on why we go through at an early age on the diseases our grandparents barely knew by the time they grew old.

The answer is as simple as possible: it is due to the lack of movement which, along with pollution and stress, it prematurely damages our body.

Consequently, since the end of the last century, Western states have launched the "**Heart Health**" program aimed at reducing the risk factors for heart diseases (stress, sedentary lifestyle, burnout, overeating, smoking, pollution etc.), and in time it has been noticed that the number and percentage of cardiovascular patients decreased from approx. 12% down to 10%, which generated budget savings of tens of billions of dollars.

Psycho-pedagogical specialists highlight the biologic, motor, psychological and social aspects of sports, and recommend that it should be practiced for at least one hour daily for children and teenagers, whilst adults should do 30 minutes of daily or weekly sports for at least 2 days, reaching 2-2.5 hours a week.

So with at least 10 minutes of intensive sports a day, people will be healthier and will have more power, increased efficiency and overall a better disposition.

Unfortunately, while influenced by the modern technology that created a virtual world and chained to the computer and television, the modern man strayed from nature or sports arenas. Doing a simple math, we can notice that we spend about 10 to 12 hours a day sitting or laying around, 8 hours in the office and a few hours at home, on TV or in front of our computers. This sedentary lifestyle increases the chances of obesity, cardiovascular disease, grade II diabetes, osteoporosis or even cancer, but also other conditions that lead to work strength and drive loss, and even premature death.

Also, cephalalgia (headaches), migraines, nausea or vertigo occur due to the body's oxygen deficiency. The solution is simple and the above can be improved by staying in the open air and doing sports to help breathe in and out, such as: jogging, cycling, outdoor sports (tennis, football, volleyball), hiking or trekking.

According to the statistics, about 70% of adults aren't doing enough exercise and 20% will not do sports at all. Many bring up the excuses of being healthy and having no weight problems, but sport is vital for them as well to maintain their health and physical shape.

Nowadays many young people prefer to stay indoors, in front of the computer and the TV for over 10 hours a day, "practicing" more computer sports games at the expense of outdoor activities and avoiding physical education hours by "unorthodox" medical relief certificates or even being "exempted" by overprotective parents.

As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched on April 7th, 1988, on World Health Day, the call for people to focus on "physical exercise, scientific nutrition and individual responsibility", because through a healthy diet, cumulated with practicing physical exercise people can maintain their health and work capacity, preventing premature aging of the body. It has been found that sports and nutrition play a significant role in the vitality of the brain and its mental form.

This first program continued with the "**Active Life**" program (1998), aiming the boost of the systematic practice of physical activities, with priority for children and young people. Research has shown that long-term physical exercise improves physical and mental health, contributing positively to the process of learning and developing personality, reducing the risk of physical and mental illness associated with modern unhealthy lifestyle.

The results were immediate and spectacular: lack of physical activity leads to overweight, favors the development of obesity and chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, which affect the quality of life, endanger people's lives and create problems for the economy due to health industry over-budgeting (White Paper on Sport, European Communities Commission, 2007).

The conclusions were that it is recommended to practice at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day by adults and 60 minutes by children.

So regular physical activity can change our lives for the better and show the following **advantages**:

First of all, it has benefits on the physical state, closely related to the overall health of the body, avoiding many possible health problems.

—favors the growth and physical development process, correcting certain physical deficiencies (e.g. spine problems - scifosis, scoliosis);

- helps us have a more beautiful and healthier body by eliminating extra pounds, contributing to body weight self-regulation;

- regulates the human body metabolism: the fats system (with a beneficial role against atherosclerosis) and the system of carbohydrates - the intake of carbohydrates in the blood (with a beneficial role against obesity);

- eliminates through sweating a wide range of toxins, impurities, fats, hormones ;

- strengthens spine flexibility, joint mobility, balance and coordination of movements;

- strengthens bones and muscles by increasing the functional capacity of the human musculoskeletal system, physical strength and overall effort capacity; recovery time after exercise will decrease as well;

- increases the functional respiratory system capacity - the lung will take in and out a greater amount of air per minute;

- strengthens the heart and the entire cardio-respiratory system - allows vessels to dilate and thus the amount of blood flowing through the body increases, producing the oxygen necessary for the processes taking place in the cells and tissues, strengthening the muscles; reduces the risk of developing coronary artery disease and cardiovascular disease;

- helps digestive processes, improving intestinal transit and removing constipation;
- boosts immunity – the ability of immune system to respond to infections (microbial aggression);

- is a good revival for sexual activity.

Sports also **strengthen immunity**, outdoor activity being the best drug for immunity. Thus, depending on the season, it is recommended skiing and skating in winter, swimming and tennis in the summer, trekking and jogging in spring and autumn.

It also has beneficial effects on the **nervous system**, developing the will and the character:

- through sport, the quality and duration of sleep are greatly improved;
- strengthens the psyche (the mind), the focus strength and memory, giving us energy, optimism and good mood, self-confidence and additional motivation to achieve goals, reduces depression and anxiety, and prepares the brain for an easier maturing;

- develops ambition, courage, distributive attention, determination, firmness, perseverance, calmness, modesty, honesty;

- increases self-confidence and self-satisfaction, and can often help discover and strengthen leadership assets;

Studies have shown that more than 90% of people experiencing mental and emotional problems such as stress, depression, come from the urban environment and have a sedentary lifestyle, and for them exercise would be a huge help, building up an extraordinarily effective "valve" for discharging internal stress.

40-50 minutes of sports (push-ups, squats, crunches, stretching) practiced at home or in a fitness room, as well as outdoor activities with friends (teaming up for tennis, volleyball, basketball) are more effective, cheaper and with longer effects than a handful of painkillers or sleeping pills.

Sports also help treat harmful vices, such as alcoholism, tobacco addiction, coffee or even drug addiction, because during physical exercise and especially after, certain substances are released that induce a state of relaxation, gratefulness, even a light euphoria, these being the incentives that those who seek alcohol or drugs are looking for and who need those in return during detoxification treatments. The most effective are team sports (basketball, handball, volleyball, football), tennis, skiing, canoeing etc.

Through the sport, dynamic brain activities are carried out, which will in time require for the same activities to use less resources, providing a quicker and more effective learning.

Exercise is also an effective means of relaxation (physical and mental). At the same time, it favors the interaction between people - socializing and consolidating human relationships, especially by practicing team sports - tennis, football, volleyball.

A side effect of practicing sports is also **the development of the aesthetic sense**.

Hence, sports represent an important and beneficial action for the health and well functioning of the whole body.

The American Academy of Neurology also emphasizes the role of sports in our lives, which is an important and necessary element for health and for the mind to function in normal and efficient parameters even as we grow old.

Physical activity is an essential component of the human being, being deeply inscribed in our genetic code, and studies have shown that sports should be practiced regardless of age, yet **the age category** we are part of influences the **no. of minimum hours** to be allocated as well as the **type and intensity of physical exercise**, beneficial to physical and mental development as well as to maintain health.

Sports and age groups

In connection with the practice of sport, the specialists identified 5 age categories:

1) **Childhood (3-12 years):** is a time when lack of physical exercise, as well as their wrong choice, can have disastrous consequences on the physical development of children. The general rule is:

as much outdoor exercise and as many variations of exercise as possible. That's why parents need to give up the bias, unfortunately still rooted, that sports divert children from school tasks. On the contrary, through sports, they will be able to consume in a useful, healthy and constructive way the energy surplus that all children have, will break off the time for the TV, computer and phone, and develop their focus and memory capacity.

From the early years of childhood, even from 3-4 years old, children can be taught to swim and go skiing. In the absence of practicing sports in an organized way, it is absolutely necessary that they will be taken out for walks and put on foot, not held in the arms. At 10-12 years, it is the age at which team sports (volleyball, handball, basketball, football) must be encouraged, as well as those that equally develop all muscle segments (gymnastics, athletics).

It is recommended to avoid those sports that increase prematurely and force the muscle mass, thus stopping the growth, or those that develop more certain body segments to the disservice of others: cycling, boxing, dumbbells, but it should be stressed that we refer to the situation when these sports are intensively made for performance, not when these sports are practiced normally and for relaxation, which is absolutely beneficial.

2) Puberty (12-18 years old): During this time an extremely important process, namely sexual maturity, takes place and sports become a real necessity, because sedentarism can generate either a delayed development or an exaggerated development - obesity. Doctors warn that 70% of young people who are suffering from sterility were at the age of predominantly sedentary puberty and faced obesity.

At this age there are especially recommended sports that develop all muscle segments, with emphasis on abdominal muscles and legs, such as swimming, skiing, athletics, gymnastics, but also light and moderate exercises of strength.

3) Teenage(18-24 years old) : is the period of body strengthening, when constructive processes continue (especially for men), although they are no longer so visible, and the body is completely defined. Exercise now has the role of shaping the body, especially since teens are confronted with their first love, and the way they look physically is important for their success or failure so that young people pay close attention to their appearance.

In order to improve their appearance, it is a good idea for them to go to fitness halls and practice other forms of physical exercise, advisable though under the guidance of a coach. As a sport, aerobics and stretching for girls, judo, boxing, martial arts and bodybuilding for boys are recommended, team sports being a good choice for both females and males, especially for the benefit of socializing.

4) Maturity (24-50 years old): During this period, sports are playing an extremely important role. Constant physical activity maintains the elasticity and agility of the body, unaltered mental capacities, educates the will and, last but not least, stress is kept under control and relieved properly. Studies show that today over 62% out of managers, scientists, computer scientists who have reached high odds of professional success regularly practice various sports. As practiced exercises, the palette wide, each choosing the exercise that suits it the most or that feels the most beneficial. Thus, we can do outdoor activities, swimming, skiing, martial arts, golf, mountain hiking or trekking, team sports (tennis). Specialists advise to try out more disciplines and practice the sports that you like the most, so you will avoid boredom and will not feel like having a chore or an obligation so you practice not only as a necessity but also by pleasure, having the feeling that you relax and do something for yourself.

5) Seniority (over 50 years old): we define it generically, because normally a well-trained and well-fed body is still young at this age. At 50, it is rather a moment of balance:

- if we have kept up to this moment in shape and moved constantly, then the threshold of third age will not bring major changes, being practically not noticeable;
- however, it is time to put our work under the guidance of a specialist (coach), applying the dictum "Better later than never". As sports, you can still practice outdoor running, swimming, skiing, various martial arts, golf, mountain hiking, team sports (tennis).

As we grow old, it is extremely important to stay active if we want to continue to enjoy small activities that once seemed piece of cake, but also to avoid depression, loneliness, senility or even forms of dementia. Sports help slow the physical and mental aging process, increasing tissues oxygenation and strengthening the immune system.

From theory to practice

Although we all know the benefits and importance of exercising in our daily lives, still it is very difficult to take that first step to get out of the comfort zone and begin practicing, meaning to move from sedentary to an active life, although sports can be done by every individual even in their homes.

Only will and motivation are needed.

To make it easier, faster and more pleasurable, specialists advise the following to make this passage:

1) try different types of movement/sports and choose the one that fits you and that you like the most;

2) for starters, take at least a few lessons with an instructor / coach, who will guide you to choose the most appropriate exercises for yourself and your chosen goal;

3) be patient because the results will show only after one to three months at least after starting to do sports regularly;

4) commit in one way or another to be resilient, to continue and not to give up. For example, take a subscription to the pool or the gym, solemnly engage in front of your friends or find a friend to go with, promise your partner that you will be constantly going to the gym or convince them to go together, this being part of your time spent with them.

Unfortunately, many of us, even those who acknowledge the importance of sports in life, claim they do not have time for sports, but we should try to combine various intensity activities to get at least the 30-minute movement that is so necessary every day.

Next, we will **classify and exemplify** physical activities according to their degree of intensity:

Very low intensity: housework (cleaning, vacuuming, cooking, handwashing) and playing various instruments;

Low intensity: walks, table tennis etc. Even simple walking instead of using the personal car or public transport has positive effects on those who for various reasons (health problems) can not practice dynamic sports.

High intensity: brisk walking (6km/h), outdoor activities (volleyball, basketball, tennis), cycling, dance, rope jump.

Very high intensity: gym training, aerobics, gymnastics, athletics, swimming, performance sports or bodybuilding.

During the last years, the scientific foundation of the exercise of physical exercise has emerged and developed through the aptitude of the Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sport, which specifies the functions and objectives of physical education and sports.

Thus, physical education functions are divided into 2 groups:

1) specific functions - which aims at physical development and motor capacity;

2) related functions – which take into account the effects of practicing physical exercise on the human body. This category includes: hygiene, relaxation, education and emulation.

As far as the objectives of physical education and sports are concerned, they derive from their specific and associated functions and are subordinated to them, classifying themselves into training and educational objectives.

Brief history on sports' importance as a social phenomenon and its characteristics in various stages of the evolution of mankind

From the primitive stages, the necessity of the struggle for food, security and survival has led to certain physical exercises such as swimming, running, jumping, dances and games practiced for mystical-religious or recreational purposes etc.

In ancient times, the personalities of Greece developed the idea of harmonious physical development of human health and for this purpose organized exercises in systems according to their purpose:

- recreational or entertaining games and activities involving citizens of all social classes (save for the slaves), the most famous event being the Olympics. Participation required the need for special training; and the people who were in these competitions were no longer considered ordinary people but competitors /sportsmen, having a particular activity than the working class or the warriors. At the

same time, as a result of the competitions development, prizes and fame, winning athletes start to be seen as heroes and models, by society.

- because of the wars' ubiquity, throughout the slave society, military physical education started developing to a great extent, especially in Sparta. Thus, war is a permanent phenomenon, and for some states (nations) even a way of life, physical training becomes a social necessity, which led to the reorganization of the existing physical exercises and the appearance of new contests, such as throwing the spear, archery, 121 fightsetc.

As a result of the development of the two types of physical activities mentioned above, there was also the need to specialize a group of people to lead the training of athletes, thus the first coaches /instructors. For example, in ancient Rome, besides preparing Romanian soldiers, there were gladiator schools where the instructors were preparing for the gladiators' physical training for fights with various weapons.

During the Middle Ages, physical education was the privilege of nobility and had to contribute, along hunting parties and knight tournaments (competitions), to the preparation for their wars, as they were part of medieval armies. Over time, education and physical training began with other classes and social groups, extending to clergy, townspeople and peasants, but it will not yet know permanence nor an organized form.

During the Renaissance, the idea emerged as physical education being needed to firstly serve the human being, and the humanists viewed physical education as necessary means in the complex of measures aimed at forming the complete man.

The ascending evolution of physical education and sports is marked by the appearance of content elements such as physical exercise, sports games and activities as well as by moving from one level of organization and systematization to a superior one.

The emergence and development of capitalism determined the restructuring of the educational process and implicitly of the physical education, the tendency being to generalize and broaden the younger generation, regardless of class membership.

In its institutionalized form, physical education will know full generalization under relatively equal conditions for all members of the young generation during socialism.

This social function has been preserved over all social, economic and historical stages, unlike the goals and objectives of physical education and sports that differ throughout history from one socio-economic formation to another and even from one state to another.

Conclusions

Physical education and sports differ from other social phenomena of life by aiming at the improvements for physical development and the humans' motor skills. It is an important education element, regulated by organizational forms and rules of conduct, meaning to optimize the individual's biological and psychological potential in order to improve their lives.

Sports develop both physical abilities and intellectual, social and moral qualities.

Sports importance in everyone's life can also be translated into statistical figures:

- sports reduce the risk of developing colon cancer by 60%;
- the risk of cardiovascular disease by 50% and
- increases life expectancy over the next 20 years by 30%.

Also, the sports activities are particularly important for society and government policies, as studies in different countries have shown that each dollar invested in physical education and sports corresponds to a \$ 3.8 reduction in medical expenses (MINEPS, 1999).

Thus, whether in ancient times there was the saying "*mens sana in corpore sano*", now it can be said that "Sports give days to life and life to days" so **we deserve our lives to change for the better.**

Today, with the help of physical education development, the activities are performed through systematization, guidance and routing based on particularities and benefits of exercise knowledge.

We hope that these many arguments will determine as many readers to give away at least 30 minutes a day from browsing the Internet and the TV shows in favor to the exercise that is so

necessary and beneficial that we intend to develop and deepen this idea and study through further articles).

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