

## The Role of Physical Activity on Women's Health

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### Abstract

**Background:** It has been shown that regular participation in sports has very important health contributions to women's health. This study provides an in-depth review of several research studies investigating the positive effects of regular exercise habits on various aspects of women's health.

**Materials and Methods:** In the search for scientific literature for this study, data from the US National Library of Medicine (PubMed), MEDLINE, PsycINFO, and Sport Discus were used, and the terms “gynecological disorders” “psychological health”, “women's health”, “exercise”, “mental health”, and were used. The relevant literature has also taken its source from the research of relevant articles from reference lists derived from data searches.

**Results:** As a result of an in-depth review of various research studies investigating its positive effects on various aspects of women's health, it has been shown that regular exercise habits can have positive effects on women's health, such as self-esteem, body image, gender-based discrimination, inequality of opportunities, cardiovascular health and mental health outcomes

**Conclusion:** The main aim should be to demonstrate the positive health effects of exercise on the prevention and treatment of obesity, self-esteem, body image, reproductive health, cardiovascular health and mental health in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between sport and women's health.

**Key words:** gynecological disorders; psychological health; women's health; exercise; mental health

### Introduction:

The findings obtained from studies on the positive contributions of sports habits on women's health emphasize the versatile positive effect of sports on women's health. Participation in sports; There have been many studies showings that it contributes to positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem, body image, cardiovascular health and mental well-being, and a scientific consensus can be established on this subject, but the challenges related to gender-based discrimination and unequal opportunities in sports are quite challenging for the relationship between women and sports. It should not be overlooked that it may lead to the emergence of an environment. Being aware of these challenges that prevent women from engaging in sports more widely and promoting inclusion and equal opportunities for women in sports will help to further increase the overall impact of regular physical activity on women's health.

There are many factors that motivate sports participation in women. All of these and some of them come together to cause women to implement regular exercise habits. When the impact on self-esteem and body image, which are one of the factors that motivate sports participation in women, is examined comprehensively, it is seen that the concepts of self-esteem and body image can be an effective factor in women's sports participation (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006). As a result of these studies, it has been shown that regular exercise habits can have a very positive effect on women's self-esteem and body image. However, gender-based discrimination and unequal opportunities in sports continue to be significant challenges for women and a possible hindering factor in women's participation in sports (Hetzl, 1986; Kumar, 2017). It is observed that gender-based discrimination and unequal opportunities can,

unfortunately, negatively affect the general well-being of women who want to engage in sports or who want to incorporate sports into their lives as a regular exercise habit.

Many factors that motivate women's participation in sports come together and cause women to acquire regular exercise habits, resulting in very positive results for women's health. Research on the relationship between women's overall health and regular physical activity reveals the positive effects of sports participation on cardiovascular health in women (Lapidus & Bengtsson, 1986; Mensink et al., 1996). Studies have shown that women who engage in regular physical activity through sports experience improved cardiovascular fitness and overall heart health. Additionally, it has been concluded that women participating in sports have significant contributions to mental health, and the fact that there are positive relationships between participation in sports and mental well-being has been revealed (Oswald et al., 2020). These findings highlight the holistic benefits of women's participation in sports, not only for physical health but also for mental well-being.

### Discussion:

Many scientific studies that accelerate the promotion of physical activity habits, which are considered as the cornerstone of improving women's health and preventing diseases, also pave the way for discussing new implications for public health policies and future research projects on women's general health. Because women's health has been the focus of attention of researchers and health professionals for many years, the effect of regular physical activity on women's health has been the subject of research for decades. The purpose of many articles in the literature is to present a comprehensive review of the impact of sports on women's health and to clearly emphasize the synthesis of evidence obtained from various studies by investigating the relationship between sports and women's health. Sports participation has been shown to have a positive effect on physical and mental health, but since the effect of sports, especially on women's health, has not yet been widely researched, it is necessary to examine the effect of regular sports habits on various aspects of women's health (Asztalos et al., 2012).

Regular physical habits and participation in sports have many benefits on women's physical health. Sääkslahti et al., (2004) emphasize the role of physical activity in early life as a preventive natural treatment method against coronary heart disease and cardiovascular risk factors, which have caused serious concern about the increasing incidence in women in recent years. Regular participation in physical activity has been shown to strengthen the cardiovascular system, increase exercise tolerance and reduce the risk of cardiovascular complications (Myers, 2003; Owe et al., 2009). In terms of the positive effects of regular physical habit and participation in sports on women's physical health, Westcott (2012) also emphasizes the importance of resistance training in increasing muscle strength and bone density, and this study emphasizes the importance of regular physical habit in maintaining skeletal health for women, especially as they age.

As exercise increasingly becomes the cornerstone of improving women's health, it has been observed that regular exercise habits can offer a multifaceted impact on women's well-being, going beyond the realm of physical fitness. While numerous and growing studies investigating the various ways in which sports contribute to the improvement of women's health in the physical, cognitive and mental domains have been added to the literature, it has been brought to the fore that the health effects of regular exercise can extend beyond the physical body and positively affect cognitive functions in women. Smith et al., (2010), in a meta-analysis showing that aerobic exercise significantly improved neurocognitive performance in women and observed benefits in areas such as memory, attention, and executive function, showed that sports participation may play crucial physiological roles in protecting against cognitive decline and improving neurocognitive health. Regular exercise habits have been

shown to have positive effects on a wide range of cognitive outcomes, and these positive effects may contribute to the development of better cognitive functions in healthy individuals, but may also serve to improve cognitive functions in those suffering from certain cognitive and brain disorders (Erickson et al., 2019).

In terms of improving women's health, it has been observed that regular physical exercise can offer a multifaceted impact on women's mental health and well-being, going beyond the realm of physical fitness. Kang (2004) showed that sports participation has a positive effect on self-esteem and body image in women, and Fernández-Bustos (2019) explained the effect of physical activity on self-concept and emphasized that it is mediated by body image and physical self-concept in adolescents.

Although it is clear that the positive effects of regular exercise habits on women's overall health are multifaceted and that exercise has the potential to create physical, mental and emotional well-being, research in this area also highlights the social and cultural barriers that women face with (Abbasi, 2014). In addition to these factors, it has been determined that there are difficulties in participating in sports, such as inadequacy in facilities and family support, and the inability of their families to encourage women who are hesitant about participating in sports. It should be underlined that more research is needed to overcome these difficulties, which can be considered as an obstacle to women gaining regular physical activity habits, and to promote the benefits of sports on women's health (Pedersen et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2016).

It has been also shown that regular exercise habits have a positive impact on various aspects of women's health, and women who engage in regular physical activity have improved cardiovascular health, including a reduced risk of heart disease and stroke (Billinger et al., 2014). Additionally, regular exercise has been associated with better weight control and management; This is very important for general health and is considered a very important health contribution in reducing the risk of obesity-related conditions such as diabetes. (Goedecke et al., 2014; Kulie et al., 2011).

### Conclusion:

Many scientific research studies have shown that regular exercise habits have a positive impact on various aspects of women's health, and women who engage in regular physical activity have improved cardiovascular health, including a reduced risk of heart disease and stroke. Additionally, regular exercise has been associated with better weight control and management; This is very important for general health and is considered a very important health contribution in reducing the risk of obesity-related conditions such as diabetes.

It has been demonstrated that participation in regular sports and exercise has positive effects on mental health as well as physical health benefits, and women who engage in physical activity are generally reported to experience lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression problems. This positive point for psychological health is attributed to the release of endorphins, which contribute to the feeling of spiritual well-being and improved mood of exercise.

It is also stated that encouraging women's participation in sports can have a significant impact on their self-confidence and body image, and it is emphasized that women who regularly participate in physical activity help them feel stronger and more confident in their bodies. As a result of all these positive contributions to mental health, it is emphasized that women with regular exercise habits can have a greater sense of self-worth and general well-being.

In addition to the comprehensive contributions of sports to women's health, it is important to examine factors such as gender-based discrimination and inequality of opportunities as problems that unfortunately may prevent women from participating in sports and to find solutions to these problems. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the more inclusive and supportive environments can be created to

encourage women's participation in sports, the more women's overall health and well-being can be improved.

Additionally, in many studies, scientific evidence about the complex interaction between physical exercise and women's health clearly presents the contributing relationship between exercise and women's health. Examining the multifaceted effects of exercise on cardiovascular health, reproductive health, mental health, and musculoskeletal integrity, these research studies highlight the various physiological, psychological, and social mechanisms through which physical activity affects women's health. In addition, by discussing new implications for public health policies and future research projects on women's overall health, the importance of encouraging the habit of physical activity, which is envisaged as the cornerstone of improving women's health and preventing diseases, will be emphasized more clearly.

In conclusion, the positive effects of regular sports habits on women's general health are multifaceted and encompass physical, mental, and emotional well-being. By promoting and supporting women's participation in sports, society can contribute to the overall improvement of women's health.

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### Author's contributions

All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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