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Title **Methods of Promoting Physical Activity. A Systematic Review**

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Aim

To assess the effectiveness and cost implications for the healthcare system of various methods for promoting physical activity.

Conclusions and results

Among others:

- Advice/counseling in routine clinical practice was consistently shown to increase physical activity by 12% to 50%. No study reported a reduced level of physical activity, and followup at 6 months or longer showed that counseling clearly boosted such activity (Evidence Grade 1).
- Physical exercise in groups leads to greater activity among cardiovascular patients. Such sessions are most effective if they are initially monitored, last between 45 and 60 minutes 2 or 3 times a week, have the proper level of intensity to improve general fitness, and continue for at least 6 months (Evidence Grade 3).
- Interventions that include a patient's general lifestyle, focusing on diet and stress management and physical activity, accelerate the increase in activity. That may be due to many different factors, including the magnitude of the intervention (Evidence Grade 3).
- Interventions that focus on improving the content of the physical education curriculum increase activity by 5% to 25% during class periods in children aged 7 to 14 years – even more so for boys than for girls (Evidence Grade 1).

Methods

The Cochrane Library databases were searched, followed by PubMed, PsycINFO, Eric, SportDiscus, and the Campbell Collaboration Library. Bibliographies of relevant publications were also checked to identify additional studies. For a study to be considered as scientific evidence in addressing the various questions under consideration, it had to meet the following criteria:

- The purpose of the study was to examine the efficacy of methods of promoting physical activity.
- A relevant control group was treated with another intervention, or no intervention.
- The outcome measure was a change in physical activity or, secondarily, physical performance.
- The followup period was at least 6 months from the start of the intervention.

Further research/reviews required

Major gaps exist in our knowledge about the long-term effectiveness of various methods for promoting physical activity. These gaps emerge not only in the content and design of the methods, but in how and by whom they should be used to achieve the desired short-term and long-term results for various patients and groups of patients. Future research should be designed to enable long-term followup of both the effectiveness and cost of various methods, while considering ethical and social aspects, including those related to gender and ethnic background. The project identified several particularly urgent areas for future research.

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