



# Physical Activity to Reduce Risk of Metabolic Diseases in Children and Adolescents: Challenges for Society



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## Introduction

The prevalence of metabolic diseases including Type 2 DM, obesity, PCOS and dyslipidemia among children and adolescence is increased worldwide as well as in our country. Although there are several contributing factors which include eating behaviors, stress, genetic susceptibility, and sedentary lifestyle but physical inactivity remained a common modifiable risk factor for these conditions. Lower socioeconomic countries like ours which lack proper planning and infrastructure do not provide opportunities to carry out adequate physical activity. Several decades back health benefits of physical activity were studied by Morris which described that bus drivers (being sedentary), had a higher risk of ischemic heart disease than the conductors who were physically moving [1]. One of the studies has reported reductions in physical activity to be closely related to the incidence of metabolic diseases and many adult diseases [2]. Today health care providers are also emphasizing on the role of physical activity in prevention of metabolic diseases. In contrary if we observe our young generations; are they able to comply with recommendations of physical activity?

In the study, published in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health journal, WHO has warned that globally 80% of adolescents are inactive which can shorten their lifespan. The recommended amount of physical activity for children aged 11-17 is "at least one hour of physical activity per day," according to WHO. In order to reduce the economic burden of metabolic diseases in a country where communicable infections are already prevalent, health care professionals have focused on awareness of metabolic diseases and advised at least some of the physical activity in children and adolescent to prevent the diseases at young age. During the growing age, children and adolescent can establish personal behavior of healthy choices and can adopt habit of being physically active in adulthood.

If we consider physical activity in our kids who spend most of their childhood in school; notice mostly the schools have a limited space, either there is no playground available and if so then the trend of morning assembly has declined, and the curriculum doesn't include the daily physical activity period. At homes many of our children and adults have no access to outdoor activity due to buildings accommodation or security reasons, either living in air-condition rooms, or don't bother to go out for fresh air and movements. Sedentary activity is also increased due to more screen time as a part of study (online classes) or entertainment, for employees (work from home either due to covid or some work demands late-night home-based works). *"All parts of the body, if used in moderation and exercised in labors to which each is accustomed, become thereby healthy and well developed and age slowly; but if they are unused and left idle, they become liable to disease, defective in growth and age quickly"* [3].

In our society we are paying attention to building the gyms, opening of Foods Street, tea shops but ignoring the body needs of physical activities and places. No more construction of new parks or playgrounds is planned, even failing to maintain the old ones; physical activity is not even the part of the curriculum in educational institutes either primary or professional, not encouraged at workplaces where working hours are prolonged sedentary. Mostly people from lower income background have less access to sports clubs or gyms which is the basic right of every individual. Although vertical growth of accommodation has fulfilled the shelter need growing population but on the other hand also reduced the availability of public sports grounds in every locality.

Multiple factors have become the prime need of today's students and youngsters. With the advancement of technology, we get anything online like information, grocery, furniture and even

food without moving and cooking. Our modern and fast living style demands time saving which is fulfilled by the availability of technology innovations. It has made our life convenient, comfortable and preserves energy. Multiple tasks can be accomplished using gadgets. Security concerns are there if children go out for walk or games. In schools there is so much academic work that students are unable to participate in extracurricular activities. And now pandemic covid has also limited physical activities.

We need to overcome our shortcomings; we can use the technology such as encouraging text messages, the sharing of step counts, and the social support of an existing social network to motivate physical activity among students and even can be adopted at employment places too [4]. All the societies can have their functional walking tracks or playgrounds as a mandatory amenity. Children and teens should be encouraged by their communities or areas of residency. Schools and higher educational institutes need to offer regular sports activities by including in curriculum designing. An urgent and practical action is required from government and relevant stakeholders to make new policies

and programs to promote physical activity and access to such facilities for our youth. Health care professionals too should also sensitize the society for this move by mentioning health benefits and writing physical activity prescription. This consensus can help us to fight against metabolic diseases at early ages and produce healthy generations.

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