



## **The real cost of not exercising**

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**FROM: The New Zealand Register of Exercise Professionals**

Those of us without bottomless budgets have noticed the cost of living is increasing. When the budget comes under scrutiny, it is often our recreation and fitness costs and memberships, that face being cut along with other 'non essential' items.

However the cost of your gym membership, or personal training is likely to be much cheaper than the cost of not exercising. New Zealand, along with the rest of the world is facing a dramatic increase in medical and health costs due to lifestyle factors and inactivity. The cost of inactivity alone was 1.3 billion dollars in 2010, according to a recent report commissioned by a group of our countries local councils.

Inactivity and other lifestyle factors create a serious financial burden, and we aren't just talking the odd sick day. While the government is currently picking up the tab in many cases, when it comes to serious illness and disease, we all pay in the end through taxes and other related costs.

### **A Growing Problem**

The increase in the waistlines of New Zealanders has led to an increase in health related illnesses. The 2008/09 New Zealand Adult Nutrition Survey found that one in three adults were overweight (37.0%), and one in four were obese (27.8%). With a population of 4.4 million, over 1,000,000 New Zealanders can be classified as obese. The cost of obesity is often linked with other serious health issues including type 2 diabetes, ischaemic heart disease (IHD), stroke, several common cancers, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, and reproductive abnormalities which lead to loss of income, and potentially stretch the New Zealand health dollar to breaking point.

### **The 'Heart of the Matter'**

Behavioural risk factors (including unhealthy diet and physical inactivity) are responsible for about 80% of coronary heart disease worldwide. It's a simple fact that a sedentary lifestyle is one of the major risk factors to heart disease; a risk factor that is easily controlled through moderate regular exercise.

A recent research study from Liverpool's John Moores University found that exercise not only helps prevent heart disease, but also may actually repair heart tissue already damaged. The research reported in the European Heart Journal showed that regular and strenuous (enough to make you sweat) exercise may lead to the development of new heart muscle. The researchers suggest that damage from heart disease or failure, could be at least partially repaired through 30 minutes of running or cycling a day, at enough intensity to work up a sweat.

### **Worth Thinking About**

According to the Mental Health Foundation, there is increasing evidence linking physical activity and improving mental health. At least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, on most days of the week, can improve mood and decrease anxiety and stress. Physical activity is also known to have a role in preventing serious mental illness such as depression.

It is those feel good chemical endorphins that hold some of the benefits for mood and mental health. They are the body's natural painkillers, and are responsible for that positive feeling experienced after physical activity. The cost of depression is both personal and financial. People with major depression take more time off work, report more work performance limitations, make greater use of health services, and report poorer health-related quality of life.

The solution is simple! - Either we open our wallets for increased government intervention of lifestyle diseases caused by inactivity, OR we can open up the front door, and get out there and exercise.

### **Examples of the cost to repair the damage caused by an unhealthy lifestyle and inactivity**

Coronary artery bypass graft (rechannel blood flow to the heart) - \$38,000 to \$57,000  
Cardiac angiogram (diagnostic test for suspected heart disease) - \$3,800 to \$4,800  
Gastric bypass (a common weight loss procedure) - \$17,000 to \$35,000  
Total hip replacement - \$19,000 to \$25,000

#### Sources and Links:

- <http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/10/24/eurheartj.ehs338.full>
- NZ heart foundation
- World Health Organisation
- Ministry of Health. 2009. Mortality and Demographic Data 2006. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- [www.southerncross.co.nz](http://www.southerncross.co.nz)

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#### **What is the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)?**

REPs is an independent non profit organisation administrating the New Zealand exercise professionals register to ensure that the public receive safe and effective exercise advice.

Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "Warrant of Fitness Check" that an exercise professional and facility meet New Zealand and international standards to deliver exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to over 35 other national exercise professional registers through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs).

