

13 June 2017

Media Release – Does regular exercise compensate for the risks of a higher bodyweight?

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Does regular exercise compensate for the risks of a higher bodyweight?

There is a growing understanding that health and wellness are not simply related to body size or ability to perform feats of physical fitness. Even the terms 'fit' and 'fat' come with a range of meanings.

However it is clear that there are some strong relationships between lower health outcomes with shorter life expectancy and a lack of fitness and higher body fat, especially in older people.

A question that is often asked is just where the line is drawn? Does regular exercise compensate for the risks of a higher bodyweight? Can a person who is a 'healthy weight' but doesn't exercise, live a long life?

We know the story that a lack of regular exercise and a high body weight can cause early death and lifestyle diseases. However, there have been questions on whether being fit can assist in overcoming some of the negative effects of obesity.

A study was recently published in the International Journal of Epidemiology which investigated the relationship between aerobic fitness in late adolescence and early death, and whether a high fitness level can compensate the risk of being obese.

The subjects had their aerobic fitness tested and weight adjusted (for more information on this sort of test ask your local REPs registered trainer as they will have trained in a range of exercise testing methods). The study included 1.3 million Swedish men with a mean age of 18 years, and during the years between 1969 and 1996. Their fitness and health were measured and then followed until now (between 20 - 40+ years).

The first part of research looked at the results from those who had a good level of aerobic fitness, and it showed that aerobic fitness was associated with a reduced risk of death in normal-weight and overweight individuals over the study period from any cause. However, these life lengthening fitness benefits were reduced in obese individuals.

These results will not be a complete surprise however, but what was interesting was when obese fit participants were compared with unfit normal weight participants. When this comparison was made, the unfit normal-weight individuals had 30% lower risk of death, than did fit obese individuals.

The study looked at all causes of death, not just lifestyle related causes, and this is perhaps where the research shows its most interesting outcome in bodyweight and early death risk reduction. While a lower bodyweight reduced the risk of early death by 45%, it decreased the risk of death associated with alcohol and narcotics abuse by 80%, and suicide by 59%.

While it sounds very dramatic, it's important to understand that while being leaner and fitter leads to a better outcome, there are positive life lengthening benefits of exercise *regardless of size*.

The most important message in all of this is 'get moving'. HOWEVER, if weight loss is not on your to do list, and you are overweight, then still 'get moving'.

Reference:

<https://academic.oup.com/ije/article/45/4/1159/2951637/Aerobic-fitness-in-late-adolescence-and-the-risk>

Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

NZ Register of Exercise Professionals, Registrar Stephen Gacsal

Email: stephen@reps.org.nz telephone: 0800 55 44 99 website: www.reps.org.nz

NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

Exercise Association of New Zealand, Chief Executive Richard Beddie

Email: richard@exercisenz.org.nz, telephone: 0800 66 88 11 website: <http://www.exercisenz.org.nz>

Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards*.

