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**Media Release – Physical Activity to Reduce the Risk of Heart Disease**

**From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals**



## **Physical Activity to Reduce the Risk of Heart Disease**

In New Zealand cardiovascular/heart disease including stroke and blood vessel disease is still the leading cause of death, accounting for 30% of deaths annually.

Every 90 minutes a New Zealander dies from heart disease, with one in twenty adults having been diagnosed with heart disease.

One of the significant things a person can do to reduce their risk of heart disease, as well as controlling it's effects, is moving regularly by doing some form of physical activity. This is in conjunction with eating well and maintaining a moderate weight.

This is why the findings of a research study published in the Journal of Physical Activity and Health this year are important, allowing more specific information about the benefits of different ways of getting moving. The study by researchers at universities in the United States looked at the association of sport and exercise, with health outcomes, as well as looking at the impact of different types of sport and exercise with the benefits of these outcomes.

As a long ranging study, it aimed to look at the relationship between participation in certain physical activities and the association with these activities and health outcomes. The study looked at the exercise behaviours over an extended period, with over 13,000 subjects aged between 45 and 64 when the study commenced in 1984. The study ran for 25 years, until 2015.

For the study, subjects were interviewed on what their preferred physical activity was, and naming their top 5. They then listed over weeks, months and years how much they participated in these activities. The list included activities such as calisthenics, walking, running, cycling and basketball. Walking was the most reported physical activity.

The study recognised that most people don't engage in sport and exercise on the basis of working at an optimal intensity. Instead, they seek to move, and the intensity levels are an outcome of this movement. Different muscle groups used are not the reason for activity but a by-product of it.

During the study, 30% of participants were diagnosed with CVD. The conclusion of the study was quite simply that participation in specific sports and exercise may substantially reduce the risk for Cardiovascular disease. Specifically racquet sports, running, aerobics and walking were associated with a lower risk of CVD. In relation to CVD, there were not significant associations for a range of activities including gymnastics, swimming, golfing, and bowling.

Important takeaways from this study:

- Intensity and muscle group use is a by-product of activity for many people
- With a limited window of opportunity for active recreation, choosing activities that have the best outcome should be encouraged.
- Further study is needed to look at the relationship between consistency of individual activities and change in these activities over time.

While any physical activity can have health benefits, in order to encourage the best possible outcomes, communities looking to grow physical activity in older adults should look at creating environments that encourage the types of activities appropriate for this age group.

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### Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals**, Registrar Stephen Gacsal

Email: [stephen@reps.org.nz](mailto:stephen@reps.org.nz) telephone: 0800 55 44 99 website: [www.reps.org.nz](http://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](http://www.icreps.org)

**Exercise Association of New Zealand**, Chief Executive Richard Beddie

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

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