

A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect of exercise on psychosocial outcomes in adults with obesity: A call for more research

Adults with obesity are at increased risk for several diseases and health conditions (type 2 diabetes, cancers, mood disorders). They may also have impaired physical and psychological functioning, negative body image, and poor quality of life. Meanwhile, the role of exercise in both obesity prevention and for adults, and in reducing the risk of developing several health conditions is clear. Exercise can improve body composition, cardiovascular health, and insulin resistance. This systematic review investigated the effect of exercise on psychosocial outcomes in adults with obesity, more specifically looking at 16 randomised controlled trials (RCTs) focused on the effect of exercise on Quality of Life, depression, anxiety, and body image in men and women with a body mass index of 30 kg/m².

The existing evidence does not suggest exercise is successful in improving psychosocial health in adults with obesity. Limitations in the studies incorporated in the review could have biased the results towards a lack of effect. Additional high-quality RCTs are needed to improve evidence-based knowledge. Exercise should still be recommended in obesity management due to its other important physical benefits. Nevertheless, to guide the decision whether exercise should be recommended as a nonpharmacologic alternative and/or complementary approach to enhance psychosocial functioning in adults with obesity, more large-scale well-controlled trials using sensitive outcome measures are needed to improve the evidence base.

Baillet A, Saunders S, Brunet J, Romain AJ, Trottier A, Bernard P. A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effect of exercise on psychosocial outcomes in adults with obesity: A call for more research. Ment Health Phys Act. 2018;14:1- 10. doi:10.1016/j.mhpa.2017.12.004