



## The Benefits of Physical Activity and Sport

### Benefits of Physical Activity

#### Health Benefits

Physical activity and sport has a range of health benefits including:-

- Reduction in premature deaths by 20-30% and in all cause mortality, hence an increase in life expectancy.
- It can improve mental health and psychological well being.
- Coronary heart disease and lower risk of contracting cardiovascular and respiratory diseases than those with sedentary lifestyles.
- It can lower the risk of strokes and treat peripheral vascular disease.
- Managing hypertension.
- Obesity and in people who are overweight.
- Musculoskeletal health including delaying the progression of osteoporosis, being beneficial for people with osteoarthritis. It can increase bone density and make joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons, stronger.
- Cancer – includes being associated with a reduction in the overall risk of cancer, has a clear protective effect on colon cancer, and is associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer after the menopause.
- Reduces the risk of type 2 Diabetes.
- Can benefit the immune system.
- It can improve balance in co-ordination, mobility, strength and endurance.
- In childhood it has a range of benefits, including healthy growth and development, maintenance of energy balance, psychological well being and social interaction.

The above facts were sourced from the Department of Health (2004) *At Least 5 a week, Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health* and the Department of Health (2009) *Be Active Be Healthy: a plan for getting the nation moving*.

On average, an inactive person spends 38% more days in hospital than an active person, and has 5.5% more family physician visits, 13% more specialist services and 12% more nurse visits than an active individual. Sari, Nazmi (2008) *Physical inactivity and its impact on healthcare utilization*.



### Economic benefits

- Reduced costs for the NHS and other services as a result of the health benefits of physical activity and sport. The estimated costs of physical inactivity in England are **£8.2 billion** annually (Department of Health, 2009), which does not include the contribution of inactivity to obesity which in itself has been estimated at £2.5 billion annually (Department of Health 2009). The figures include both the costs to the NHS and costs related to the economy, such as absence from work.
- Costs of physical inactivity and savings as a result of physical activity (2006/07):-
  - o Total savings for the sub region of Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire - £13749420
  - o Coventry Teaching PCT - £3621860,
  - o Solihull NHS Care Trust - £2954390 and
  - o Warwickshire PCT - £7173170

These figures are likely to be an under estimation as the research took into account 5 of the 20 plus chronic conditions that physical inactivity contributes to in order to calculate the figures (Department of Health, 2007).

### Other benefits

- Personal development and life skills, depending on the activity, such as discipline, people skills and self confidence.
- Community development in some settings, for example, bringing people together and breaking down barriers.
- As a diversionary tactic in some settings, for example, prevention and reduction of crime, drugs and alcohol use and mental health problems.
- For developing athletes and performers in order to improve skill levels and for people to succeed at all levels in their chosen activity.
- If an activity such as cycling and walking to work is undertaken, pollution and noise levels can be reduced and individuals can save on transport costs.
- It can be fun and people gain enjoyment from it, which in turn has a number of other benefits.