



Exercise is Generally Safe, But Dangers Should Not Be Dismissed

Description

A five-year study directed by scientists from the University of Bath in the UK discovered that the dangers of extreme harm from most physical activities and exercise are incredibly small. The British Medical Association funded a study that found that, even though some endurance activities, like road cycling, are deemed dangerous, they are still generally safe. This implies that the advantages of taking part in physical activities outweigh the potential risks.

For the first time ever, researchers in England and Wales have taken on the task of evaluating and quantifying the potential hazards of trauma related to sports or physical activities. It is expected that the findings of this study will help people participating in such activities and their organizers to make them much more secure. The recently published research in *Injury Prevention*, a journal from BMJ, was based on data collected from medical centers across the country that dealt with major traumas related to sports and exercise.

In a study conducted between 2012 and 2017, the researchers determined that 11,702 trauma injuries were incurred due to participation in sports and physical activity. The primary researcher of the study, Dr. Sean Williams of the Department for Health and the Centre for Health and Injury and Illness Prevention at the University of Bath stated: "The results of this research show that engaging in physical activity is generally safe and beneficial."

Although there are always risks associated with exercising, the potential for serious injury is minimal in comparison to the multiple health and wellness benefits that come with being physically active. 61 physical activities were investigated in a study, regardless of their level of popularity, in order to give a comparable assessment of the risks to individuals engaging in them. Injury rates from fitness activities, including running, golf, dance classes, and gym sessions, are notably lower than others. 0.70 injuries, 1.25 injuries, and 0.10 injuries occur per 100,000 participants/year for running, golf, and fitness classes, respectively.

Football had the highest injury incidence rate of any sport with high participation, though it is still relatively low at 6.56 injuries per 100,000 people per year. Research showed that motorsports, equestrian activities, and gliding (paragliding and hang gliding) were the most dangerous of the studied

activities, with 532, 235, and 191 injuries per 100,000 participants, respectively. For males, the rate of injuries per 100,000 participants annually was 6.4, while for females, the rate stood at 3.3 injuries per 100,000 participants per year.

What risks are associated with physical activity?

It is concerning that the risks of injury related to popular sports and physical activities are escalating worldwide. In Victoria, Australia, for example, the yearly amount of sport/exercise-inflicted injuries that needed hospitalization went up 24% between 2004 and 2010 and there was a rate of 12.2 major traumas or fatalities of participants in sports for every 100,000 people a year.

In the UK, the same trend can be seen. Data from one regional trauma and spine unit reveals a staggering five-fold growth in serious motorsports accidents between 2010 to 2015. As the leader of the study, Dr Madi Davies, formerly a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Bath, noted: "In 2012 — the year the study commenced — the risks were evidently much less in comparison with the risks observed in the later years of the study." She advocated for more studies to be done expeditiously in order to gain insight into the cause and effect of the increasing rate of injuries. She noted that while the rise in injuries could be a result of better recording of trauma data during the study, it is essential to address any increases in the number of cases and use the data to make activities safer.

This study has the goal of lessening the heavy load of harm caused to patients, their families, and the National Health Service when people are hospitalized. It intends to reach this objective by examining the danger of each activity and then taking suitable action. Dr Williams declared that a lot of traumas happening during sports and recreational activities can be avoided. He specified that by utilizing protective gear, making alterations in regulations or legislation, and providing education, once we determine the sources and sites of injuries, we can begin to think of methods to prevent them in each sporting activity/exercise. It is desired that this effort will result in the creation of a national register with prospects for real-time data analysis. This register would regularise the logging of serious injuries caused by sports and physical exercise so that any tendencies or designs in danger can be immediately detected and addressed.

In the UK, trampoline safety became a concern when sales of garden trampolines skyrocketed to a whopping 250,000 by 2014. In response, RoSPA and the Royal College of Emergency Medicine identified an increase in trampoline-related injuries and consequently, they issued guidelines for improving safety. These included limiting trampolines to one person at a time, banning children under the age of six from using them and selecting trampolines that come with safety nets. To improve safety at trampoline parks, trampoline manufacturers were given assistance in order to comply with safety regulations, such as adding padding around the edges. Additionally, commercial partners were recruited to further enhance safety. There has been a marked decrease in serious accidents due to the directives of RoSPA.

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Journal Reference:

Madeleine Davies, Tom Lawrence, Antoinette Edwards, Carly McKay, Fiona E Lecky, Keith A Stokes, Sean Williams. **Sport-related major trauma incidence in young people and adults in England and Wales: a national registry-based study.** *Injury Prevention*, 2023; ip-2023-044887 DOI: [10.1136/ip-2023-044887](https://doi.org/10.1136/ip-2023-044887)

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