

PhysioBiz

Health newflashes

for bodies busy moving, working, playing, being.



Break the barriers: fitness should be accessible to all women!

Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Physiotherapy Society!

May 2017 sees an important anniversary: on 28 May, it's 30 years since the International Day of Action for Women's Health was established. Its main focus is on sexual and reproductive rights, but the South African Society of Physiotherapy would like you to think about another important right on this day: the right of all women, everywhere, to have free, unfettered access to fitness! What does that mean?

Well, think about the barriers that exist:

- Do you feel safe on a solo run at dusk?
- Do you cycle comfortably alone?
- Have you had to deal with sexual harassment while running, walking or cycling?
- Is there a safe, welcoming gym or swimming pool within easy reach of your home?
- Do you fear the exercise environment because of problems with your body image?
- Does your family get behind your sporting goals? For example: women remain the major caregivers: is there someone to take the kids while you get fit?
- Women tend to earn less than men: can you afford to participate in exercise?

- Does your girl child attend a school that offers a range of sports for girls?
- Where are the role models? Scan the average newspaper sports pages or sports reports on TV: the ratio is at least 20 reports on men in sport to one woman.

These are all very real obstacles to female fitness.

And here are some of the benefits they're blocking:

Exercise reduces your risk of inflammation

More and more, scientists are realising that inflammation is an underlying process closely associated with diseases like heart disease, stroke and diabetes, as well as painful and debilitating conditions like arthritis.

Exercise maintains bone mass

No-one should have to face loss of bone density – osteoporosis – as they age. Exercise is a huge contributor to healthy bones; it can even build bone tissue.

Exercise is crucial to brain function

Being active regularly increases your levels of certain important molecules involved in cognition. Exercise regularly and your memory will be better and you'll learn faster.

Exercise is a powerful weapon against depression

Daily exercise reduces mild clinical depression very effectively, and boosts mood for everyone.

Exercise helps you cope

Regular exercise boosts immune system activity, helps you sleep better and gives you energy.

Break the barriers

To get rid of those barriers, we have to change society!

- Campaign for safe cycle paths and running routes that have security features such as guards on patrol.
- Campaign for more news about women in sport.
- Demand that sexual harassment of women athletes is taken seriously. Carry a whistle and use it.
- If you are a man, this is as much your job as your woman partner's. If you see men harassing a woman in a public space, speak out, make them understand this is not legal or right.
- Ask your gym to provide child-minding.
- Campaign for sports at school for all girls.

Ask your physiotherapist for her or his thoughts on how you can get the exercise that is your right, safely and comfortably.

CONTACT:

To find a physiotherapist close to you who can advise and provide you with a tailor-made programme of exercise, contact:

The South African Society of Physiotherapy

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