

Infographic. All health professionals should talk about physical activity with patients

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Infographic: All health professionals should talk about physical activity with patients

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Regular physical activity contributes to the prevention and management of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer, as well as improved mental health, sleep, and cognitive function.[1] Despite these benefits, populations worldwide are insufficiently active.[2] Enabling people with the lowest levels of physical activity to become more active is where the greatest gains to public health will be achieved.[3]

Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers are increasingly advocating for a systems approach to physical activity promotion. This should involve stakeholders across diverse sectors to develop and implement a coherent set of actions to support populations to be physically active.[1] Healthcare is frequently identified as an important setting for physical activity promotion. Healthcare professionals have access to a large proportion of the population and are a respected source of health advice. When people are in a healthcare setting, they typically have heightened concern about their health, and thus may be particularly receptive to health promotion interventions. However, health professionals receive very little training on physical activity, and what gets taught is highly variable across institutions.[4]

The Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018 – 2030 calls for the integration of physical activity teaching into the pre- and in-service training of health professionals, such that the healthcare workforce is equipped to promote physical activity in routine care.[5] This training should aim to build knowledge and confidence and empower health professionals to prioritise conversations with patients around physical activity. These conversations should incorporate four key elements: 1) assessing patients' physical activity levels and

discussing circumstances; 2) providing physical activity advice; 3) discussing barriers to physical activity and agreeing realistic goals; and 4) signposting patients to local physical activity opportunities. Health professionals should also follow-up with patients at future appointments.

The International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH), the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID, UK government), and Sport England, have collaborated on the development of two infographics aimed at raising awareness of the role of healthcare in physical activity promotion. The first (published here) makes the case for embedding physical activity into the curricula of all health-related training courses. The second (available at <https://ispah.org/resources/key-resources/8-investments/>) summarises the steps involved in a physical activity-focused discussion, and can be used as a prompt for health professionals during routine consultations with patients.

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Competing interests

There are no competing interests for any author.

Contributorship

KM conceived the idea. KM, JLM, MM, AC, and SD agreed the initial content of the infographic, with input from SG and JB. JLM and MM created the infographic. KM led the commentary. All authors contributed to revising the infographic and commentary and approved the final versions.

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ALL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS SHOULD TALK ABOUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WITH PATIENTS

EVERY MOVE COUNTS

Almost all adults would benefit from moving more! This is especially true for older adults and those with long-term conditions.^(1, 2)

BENEFITS OUTWEIGH RISKS

People with long-term conditions may feel reassured to learn that the benefits of physical activity outweigh any risks.⁽³⁾

HEALTHCARE HAS VAST REACH

Health professionals, including doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals, encounter large proportions of the population every year.⁽⁴⁾

TRUSTED ADVICE WORKS

One in four people would be more active if advised by a health professional.^(5, 6)

TRAINING IS NEEDED

Teaching on physical activity should be embedded in all health-related training courses to equip the healthcare workforce to talk about physical activity with patients.^(7, 8)

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT WITH PATIENTS?⁽¹⁾



ASSESS CURRENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS AND DISCUSS CIRCUMSTANCES



PROVIDE **ADVICE** ON BEING MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE



DISCUSS BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND AGREE ON REALISTIC **GOALS**



SIGNPOST TO LOCAL **OPPORTUNITIES**



SHARE YOUR STORY

Share stories and find out how others are integrating physical activity into their practice, via ISPAH's free Community Hub.