

Aerobic exercise helps keep blood pressure low

BY IRA DREYFUSS
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Fifty-four studies combined data put the weight of evidence behind the benefit of aerobic exercise to control blood pressure.

Exercise pushes down blood pressure, regardless of age, weight, or what blood pressure was when the person started to exercise, according to a statistical analysis of the studies.

The average reduction was 3.8 milligrams of mercury in systolic pressure — the measurement taken when the heart contracts — and pushes blood through the arteries. The average diastolic reduction, taken when the heart relaxes, was 2.55 milligrams of mercury lower.

"If we can reduce systolic pressure by 3.8, we can reduce a lot of risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke — everything," said Dr. Jiang Ho of Tulane University.

Being physically inactive raises the risk of developing high blood pressure. And federal surveys find 25 percent of all adults are not active at all. About a quarter of American adults have high blood pressure, and the risk of problems resulting from the condition gets worse as pressure rises.

Normal blood pressure in an adult is lower than 130 systolic, 85 diastolic. High blood pressure is 140 over 90 or above. Readings between those are considered borderline.

The report in the April issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine*

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examined studies involving 2,419 participants.

The researchers pooled cases from smaller studies in which some people did aerobic exercise and others did not. The scientists counted on the resulting larger number of cases to give a more accurate assessment of the effect of aerobic exercise on blood pressure. Evidence on the size of

the effect had been inconsistent in the smaller groups, they said.

The pooled figures showed the extent of the drop in blood pressure was fairly consistent regardless of what form of exercise the participants did.

"For someone who is sedentary, even small things like walking or riding a bike, the study shows, can significantly

reduce their blood pressure," said researcher Seamus P. Whelton of Princeton.

It also did not make a difference whether the participants were overweight or at normal weight. "Blood pressure was significantly reduced even in participants who did not lose weight overall," the report said.

The benefit was there whether the participants had high blood pressure or normal blood pressure. And the extent of the reduction from exercise was greater than what was found in similar studies on reducing salt in the diet or reducing alcohol use.

The reduction cited in the paper is modest but valuable, said Dr. Gerald Fletcher of the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville,

Fla., who is also a spokesman for the American Heart Association.

"It's a good additional bit to know for our pitch on lifestyle changes rather than taking pills or other things that may give side effects," Fletcher said.

The benefits of exercise may vary among individuals, but the paper in the journal "probably shows us the average to expect," Fletcher said. Overweight people, for instance, may draw reassurance from the paper's finding that their blood pressure can improve from physical activity even if they don't lose weight, he said.

For more information, visit the American Heart Association exercise page: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml>

Soccer concussions do not impair learning for athletes

BY IRA DREYFUSS
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP) — Concussions from heading a soccer ball or running into another player won't keep a young athlete from learning, researchers say.

A study of high-level college soccer players who were in the sport since childhood finds that having had more concussions does not impair scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test or on research tests of thinking ability.

Some earlier studies had found soccer players scored lower on tests of memory and planning ability. And one doctor who did not take part in the new study says the latest report still leaves the issue unsettled. However, the new study's researchers feel confident in their conclusion.

"The overwhelming majority of U.S. soccer players — that

■ Researchers had the students complete questionnaires on sports they had played. The students also reported on blows to the head that resulted in such concussion symptoms as blurred vision, difficulty remembering or difficulty concentrating. To be sure the head injury answers were accurate, reports were crosschecked against available medical records.

being those at the youth, junior high and high school levels — would appear to be at no greater risk for these impairments than the average person," according to the report in the March issue of the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*.

The study was done at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and focused on its students. The researchers looked at 240 students at the start of their freshman or sophomore years, among them 91 soccer players and 96 athletes in

other sports. The other students were on no team.

Researchers had the students complete questionnaires on sports they had played. The students also reported on blows to the head that resulted in such concussion symptoms as blurred vision, difficulty remembering or difficulty concentrating. To be sure the head injury answers were accurate, reports were crosschecked against available medical records.

The researchers also reviewed the students' SAT scores, and

gave them six mental function tests covering such areas as the ability to concentrate, find objects on a page, and remember and use words and numbers.

The soccer players averaged more than 15 seasons of play. Almost half reported one or more concussions, compared with 29 percent of non-soccer athletes and 15 percent of non-athletes. When injuries directly related to soccer were excluded, all the students had about the same number of concussions.

However, the higher rate of injuries from soccer didn't seem to affect thinking ability, the researchers say. SAT scores and results of the thinking ability tests were equivalent in all three groups.

"Our results indicate that participation in soccer is safe, at least up to the college level, when considering its effect on neurocognitive function," the study says.

The findings should relieve

parents' fears that their children will suffer brain damage if they bang heads with another player or head the soccer ball, says researcher Kevin Guskiewicz of UNC Chapel Hill.

Guskiewicz notes the possibility that Chapel Hill's SAT and grade point average requirements for admission could have weeded out soccer players who did suffer brain damage. But he says preliminary data from an ongoing study of high school students also finds no evidence that soccer damages thinking ability.

An outside expert says the report could not be considered the final word. Dr. Reginald Washington, who chairs the American Academy of Pediatrics' sports medicine committee, stands by the academy's March 2000 statement that the risks of permanent cognitive impairment are not yet known.

Other studies have found some impairments do occur, Washington says. One such

study by researchers in the Netherlands found higher risks among regular soccer players than among swimmers and track athletes. The study was published in 1999 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

It could be that the researchers missed some impairments in the Chapel Hill students, Washington says. "Just because an NCAA-level study says there is no cognitive relationship, does that mean there may not be a small subset that didn't show up in the study?"

The pediatricians' guidelines call on adults who supervise youth soccer to minimize heading. And Washington says that's still good advice.

Programs

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NOTICE IS ALSO HEREBY GIVEN that in connection with the Reorganization, application has been made to the Comptroller of the Currency for consent to consolidate **Franklin Bank, N.A.**, 24725 West 12 Mile Road, P.O. Box 5006, Southfield, Michigan 48068-5006, with and into **FB Interim National Bank**, 24725 West 12 Mile Road, P.O. Box 5006, Southfield, Michigan 48068-5006.

The main office and branch offices of **Franklin Bank, N.A.** will continue to operate after the proposed Reorganization at the same locations as prior to the proposed Reorganization.

This notice is published pursuant to 12 USC 1828(e) and 12 CFR 5. This notice will appear three times at approximately two-week intervals beginning April 21, 2002 and ending May 23, 2002.

Any person desiring to comment on these applications may do so by submitting written comments within 30 days of the date of the first publication of this notice to Licensing Manager, Comptroller of the Currency, Central District Office, One Financial Place, Suite 2700, 440 South LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois 60605. The public file is available for inspection in that office during regular business hours. Written requests for a copy of the public file on the applications should be sent to the licensing manager.

Dated: April 21, 2002
FRANKLIN BANK, N.A.
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