Modern Sedentary Lifestyle: A Concern for Public Health

Modern humans are very sedentary in comparison to their ancestors. Prolonged sitting is a common behaviour in the modern lifestyle. People spend most of their time working on a computer, driving, and watching television (Magnon et al., 2021). Sedentary behaviour is directly linked with all-cause mortality. Poor physical health outcomes accompany sedentary behaviour, contributing to deteriorating human health (Saunders et al., 2020). This essay will elucidate in what way a sedentary lifestyle in the modern world affects the health of people. The main health issues related to sedentary behaviour will be explored in the essay.

Insufficient physical activity is considered a global public health threat. In developed and developing nations, it is affecting the lives of millions of people. The burden of non-communicable diseases is high in a person with a high sedentary behaviour. Occupational sedentary lifestyle is becoming more common as compared to spending time in leisure-related activities (Owen et al., 2020). Sedentary behaviour is defined as any waking behaviour a person spends sitting, reclining, or lying with ≤1.5 metabolic equivalents energy expenditure. It is now recognised as a major health risk, mainly linked with type-2 diabetes and musculoskeletal and cardiovascular disorders (Magnon et al., 2021). According to the World Health Organization (2024), regular physical activity benefits people's physical and mental health. Sedentary behaviour places a huge burden on healthcare systems. Approximately 31% of adults and 80% of adolescents worldwide do not meet the recommended physical activity levels.

The low expenditure of energy in a sedentary lifestyle leads to lessened cardiorespiratory fitness. Prolonged sitting results in insulin resistance, vascular dysfunction,

and increased body fat mass. Being overweight or obese is common as people now are engaged in increased sedentary behaviour (Pinto et al., 2023). Physical, cognitive, and emotional health is affected by a high risk of sedentary behaviour. Obesity due to physical inactivity leads to an increased risk for hypertension, type-2 diabetes, cardiac arrest, and cancer (WHO, 2024). Breaking sedentary patterns by taking breaks is an important determinant of improved health outcomes. People are required to break prolonged sitting as uninterrupted sedentary bouts are increasingly detrimental to health. A great decline in all-cause mortality is evident in people with shorter sedentary bouts (Owen et al., 2020).

Health-related quality of life is decreased with increased sedentary behaviour. It affects the mental, social, physical, and functional domains of a person's life. However, increasing physical activity and regular exercise can alleviate the health risks of a sedentary lifestyle (Saunders et al., 2020). At least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity is recommended throughout the week (WHO, 2024). In order to achieve optimal health outcomes, recommended physical activity levels should be met by people. Improved physical fitness can mitigate the harmful repercussions of prolonged sitting (Magnon et al., 2021). Pinto et al. (2023) reveal that reducing sedentary behaviour results in improved postprandial glucose and insulin responses, blood pressure, and vascular function. It leads to strengthening metabolism and cardiovascular health outcomes. Interrupting sedentary patterns is a low-risk strategy and a positive step to participate in regular physical activity.

To conclude, modern lives are becoming increasingly sedentary as a result of work and life demands. The more time spent sitting or lying in one place, the more a person's health is compromised. The burden of disease is high in people exhibiting prolonged sedentary behaviour. The risk of type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, muscle-related

problems, and cancer is high in sedentary lifestyles. Breaking the pattern of sedentary behaviour can benefit physical and mental health. Meeting the recommended physical activity level serves as a stepping stone towards lessening sedentary behaviour-related health risks.

References

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