



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE NATIONAL DAY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Minister of Health

July 9th 2019

The Government of Uganda, on the 25th June 2018, designated the 2nd Sunday of July as the National Day of Physical Activity. Subsequently, the day was launched by H.E The President on the 8th July, 2018. The day will be held annually as a way of strengthening Government's efforts in the prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

This year, the day will be commemorated on Sunday, 14th July at Kololo Independence Grounds under the theme "***My health, My responsibility***" to inform the population about the importance of physical activity, its relevance in the prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and premature mortality from lifestyle diseases and the need for each of us to take serious responsibility for our health.

Physical Activity is any form of bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Being physically inactive is a major risk factor for developing NCDs such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and mental illnesses.

The prevalence of NCDs is anticipated to increase if individuals do **NOT** change to an active lifestyle. Despite global commitments by all World Health Organization (WHO) member states to reduce physical inactivity by 10% by 2025, increasing levels of physical inactivity are being observed globally and specifically, here in Uganda.

Physical inactivity is reported as the 4th leading risk factor for death globally; causing 6% of deaths worldwide. It is estimated that 1 in every 4 adults globally is not physically active enough.

WHO recommends at least 150 minutes (2hrs:30mins) of moderate intensity or 75 minutes (1hr:15mins) of vigorous intensity physical activity per week or 30 minutes of moderate activity daily among adults. Children and adolescents require a minimum of one hour per day of physical activity.

The recommended time can be met through work, travel and/or leisure related physical activities. It is important that individuals engage in physical activity they enjoy for example; dancing, cycling, jogging, running, gardening, playing sports such as Football, Volleyball, Netball, Basketball.

Results from the Uganda NCD risk factor survey (2014) showed that Ugandans are becoming increasingly physically *inactive*. High physical inactivity was noted especially in the urban population where 8% of adults were considered physically inactive compared to 3.5% among the rural population.

The survey indicated that adults aged between 50-69 years are more physically inactive (7.8%) compared to the younger age groups i.e. 18-29 years (4.1%) and 30-49 years (3.2%). Females are also less active as compared to their male counterparts (women 4.9%, men 3.7%).

Urbanisation - characterised by use of motorised transport such as motorcycles (boda-bodas) and cars; use of computers, remote controls for electronic gadgets, excessive television watching - is one of the factors associated with physical inactivity among our population.

Other factors that result into physical inactivity include; some work settings that require long sitting hours, like offices, markets and shops that are associated with minimal movement.

Besides being a major risk factor to NCDs, physical inactivity results into bone, joint and back problems and lack of physical fitness among others.

As Uganda commemorates the 2nd National Day of Physical Activity, the Ministry of Health is reminding the population about the importance of physical activity and urging Ugandans to adopt healthier lifestyles such as; consumption of healthy diets like eating fruits and vegetables, reduced intake of salts and sugars, avoiding tobacco and alcohol use, regular medical check-up and screenings to detect diseases especially NCDs early before complications set in.

Increased physical activity reduces the risk of NCDs like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancers leading to a healthier and more productive population which will eventually contribute to the overall economic development of the Uganda.

The Ministry is currently developing the National Physical Activity guidelines and supporting the promotion of physical education in schools as part of the efforts to increase physical activity among the population.

Promotion of physical activity is a responsibility of all sectors and cannot be left to the Health Sector alone.

The Ministry of Health is using a multi-sectoral approach in the prevention of NCDs in which several Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies and the private sector are encouraged to join efforts towards this cause. The works sector for example is implored to ensure that cyclists and pedestrians are catered for in the planning process. We appreciate that some of the roads have now been constructed with adequate walk ways to promote safety when walking or running and cycling lanes to encourage cycling.

The Education sector should ensure that physical education is compulsory in all schools (both public and private) and that space is available for the same.

I therefore call upon Ugandans both in Government and private sector to support efforts that promote physical activity at the work place so that we can reduce the number of people who suffer from NCDs and increase on the productivity of our staff. Promotion of physical activity at work place is an investment to our staff's health and wellbeing.

I am glad that after the launch of the National Day of Physical Activity last year, many MDAs heeded to my advice to start weekly exercises for staff. Those that have not started, this is a wakeup call to start and make our staff healthy and more productive. The Ministry of Health carries out its weekly exercises every Friday from 4.00pm to 6pm.

As I conclude, I implore all of you in your various capacities to adapt to a healthy lifestyle and also participate in;

1. Creating favorable environments for regular exercises and recreation, including mandatory physical education in schools
2. Making healthy foods available and affordable
3. Reducing salts and sugars in foods and beverages
4. Levying appropriate regulation on tobacco and alcohol consumption
5. Creating awareness to empower our citizens with appropriate information on prevention NCDs
6. Providing opportunities for medical checkups and screening for NCDs

The 2nd National Physical Activity day will be commemorated at **Kololo Ceremonial Grounds on Sunday, 14th July, 2019**. The Guest of Honour will be the **President of Uganda, H E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**.

During the commemoration a number of activities will take place. These include:

- A 10 km walk led by H E President of Uganda
- Aerobics
- Screening for Cancer, High Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Heart Diseases among others, free of charge.
- Assorted sports activities such as Football, Netball, Volleyball, Basketball

Ministry of Health appreciates all her partners especially World Health Organization, NCD consortium, other Civil Society Organizations, the private sector and the media for supporting all the activities for the National day of physical activity and all the efforts for prevention and control of NCDs.

I call upon all of you to join us as we commemorate the National Day of Physical Activity.

For God and My country



DR. ACENG JANE RUTH.

MINISTER OF HEALTH.