

Editor's Note [Volume 26 No. 2 (2026)]

Impact of Diet and Exercise on Human Health

As of now, NCDs have become a scourge in Kenya as many people die from cancer not diagnosed in good time and at a much younger age; from cardiovascular disease that often goes undiagnosed and type 2 diabetes that becomes difficult to manage. Can we step up our advisory for exercise and diet management?

Diet and exercise are two of the most influential lifestyle factors that shape human health across the lifespan. Their effects are deeply interconnected, influencing physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

1. Physical Health Benefits

- **Weight Management:** A balanced diet combined with regular physical activity helps prevent obesity and supports healthy weight loss or maintenance. Obesity is a modern health challenge, a stark contrast to my upbringing over six decades ago in western Kenya.
- **Disease Prevention:** Healthy eating and exercise reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers.
- **Longevity:** Studies show that individuals who maintain healthy dietary patterns and stay physically active live longer and enjoy a better quality of life. It is not just a question of how long one lives. What is the quality of that longevity?

2. Mental and Emotional Well-being

- **Mood Regulation:** Exercise stimulates endorphin release, improving mood and reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Depression and stress can be insidious killers, and the best approach is to avoid them.
- **Cognitive Function:** Physical activity enhances brain health, improving memory and focus while reducing the risk of cognitive decline.

- Sleep Quality: Both diet and exercise contribute to better sleep patterns, which in turn support overall health. Poor sleep is a major health risk.

3. Interaction Between Diet and Exercise

- Synergistic Effects: Nutrition provides the fuel for exercise, while exercise improves metabolism and nutrient utilization. They go hand in hand.
- Across the Lifespan: From childhood to old age, the combination of healthy eating and regular activity supports growth, development, and healthy aging.

4. Risks of Poor Lifestyle Choices

- Sedentary Behaviour + Poor Diet: This combination leads to obesity, metabolic syndrome, and increased mortality.
- Global Concern: Nearly 30% of the world's population is overweight or obese, highlighting the urgent need for lifestyle interventions. Personal choices are crucial, as not every regimen works for everyone.

Expert advice is essential, as there are many myths without a scientific basis. The World Health Organization (WHO) has excellent advice on diet, exercise and non-communicable diseases. Please look it up.

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In this issue, we have 14 excellent well-reviewed manuscripts.

