

Calling nurses to exercise as role models for their patients

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Nurses, just like many of their patients, struggle to find time and motivation to exercise. But a new study may give these all-important caregivers some additional pressure and responsibility: nurses' attitudes can influence whether their patients commit to a healthy lifestyle.

"[Nurses](#) should model healthy [exercise behavior](#)," said Joyce Fitzpatrick, an author of the study in the *International Journal of Nursing Practice* and the Elizabeth Brooks Ford Professor of Nursing at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University.

The study found, however, that nurses may not actually be good models for an active lifestyle.

Fitzpatrick and Eileen M. Esposito from [Physicians](#) & Ambulatory Network Services at the North Shore, LIJ Health System in Manhasset, N.Y., published findings from a study of 112 nurses from a New York hospital in the article, "Registered nurses' beliefs of the benefits of exercise, their exercise behavior and their patient teaching regarding exercise."

Nearly half of the nurses in the study were overweight or obese. About 93 percent were female with an average age of 43. About 40 percent of the study's nurses are 50 years or older. All the male nurses had body mass indices in the overweight and obese range.

Researchers asked the nurses about the relationship between what they

believe about exercise, what their personal exercise habits are and what they recommend to patients.

They found that if nurses believe in exercise, they promote it.

The results came from answers to a 52-item questionnaire about exercise, responses to two questions about whether they recommend exercise to patients for health reasons, and rankings on a scale of 1 to 10 whether they would encourage their patients to exercise.

The researchers concluded that both patients and nurses need encouragement as they attempt to embrace healthy habits. In particular, nurses who struggle with weight and fitness can help patients by sharing their own challenges.

This research supports the positive link between beliefs in exercise and its benefits and the promotion of its health benefits, the researchers report.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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