

South Asian people like to exercise in social groups, study finds

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(Medical Xpress)—A study by Stirling's Dr Ruth Jepson has determined that South Asian people in the UK will be more likely to exercise if it can be done as part of a group and has a social element.

People of South Asian backgrounds living in the UK have a five-fold increased risk of diabetes and a two-fold increased risk of heart disease by comparison with the general population. However they are less likely to exercise than the general population.

As physical activity can reduce the risk of [premature death](#) from a range of conditions, Dr Jepson's study explored the likely [motivating factors](#) which might encourage South Asian adults to exercise and improve their health.

Dr Jepson says: "The idea of exercising your way to better health is not a message which motivates most Asian adults. They want exercise to have an element of [socialising](#), of having fun with family or friends. They also need local or national role models.

"We found that South Asian men like football and the gym, while women like walking and swimming. But men are traditionally employed in shops where they work long hours so they find it difficult to find the time to exercise - they want to spend what little spare time they have with their families.

"Previous studies have never really looked at what might motivate

women to take [physical exercise](#). There are no [role models](#) for South Asian women, no female Muslim athletes in the UK to encourage them to go out and exercise. But we found that they would go swimming or to the gym if they could do it as a way of socialising in a group."

Dr Jepson concludes: "Many South Asian adults don't often do things individually. If we are to encourage them to exercise their way to better health, then we must take account of the [social context](#) of their lives, which often revolve around the Mosque, the home and the family. "

Provided by University of Stirling

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