

Judo for health

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Introduction

World Health Organization has defined "health as being a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Thus, health should be considered as the general condition of a person in all aspects viz., human biology, environment, life style and healthcare services. Researches conducted at the Medical Institute of the American Academy of Science proved that intelligent life style choices determines health in 53%, environment conditions in 21%, genetics in 16% and healthcare services in 10 percent [1]. In life style most important role plays regular physical activity, ability to manage stress situations and to proper nourishment.

Judo is a such kind of sport and recreation which is one of few disciplines fulfilling holistic approach towards life and health.

Appreciating all these values judo was introduced into curriculum of physical education in Japan in 1911.

Why judo is good for health?

Judo is ideal for the development of a well proportioned body. If someone who trains judo uses his right arm, he must use his left as well. If somebody bends forward, he must bend back. Judo training not only makes muscles stronger, ligaments more flexible, but it develops speed, balance, anaerobic and aerobic capacity of the trainee depending on type, intensity and duration of the exercises. Motor fitness is important in judo but it also has health implications. These concerns not only learning technique of throwing the partner but ability to fall. This ability of performing *ukemi* so typical for judo is useful in everyday life preventing possibility of bone fracture and back problems in case of unexpected fall. Body balance and coordination developed during judo training provide proper postural and movement control of the whole body during daily activities.

A key component of health-related fitness is aerobic capacity, measured by maximal oxygen uptake (VO_{2max}). It is the objective measure of the power of the aerobic chain consisting of respiratory, cardiovascular and metabolic functions [2].

Researches of elite judo players proved that their maximal oxygen uptake is pretty high ($VO_{2max}=62.5 \text{ ml/kg}^{-1}/\text{min}^{-1}$)

[3,4]. Callister et al. [5] determined US male judo athletes to have a mean VO_{2max} value $55.6 \text{ ml/kg}^{-1}/\text{min}^{-1}$ [6].

Systematic judo training, under proper supervision, increases fitness and decreases risk of coronary heart and pulmonary diseases.

Due to versatile development of body and internal organs judo practice diminishes possibility of civilisation illnesses such as hyperlipidemia, hypertension, diabetes, cancer and others.

It has been noticed that there is a close relation between occurrence of scoliosis and asymmetry of hips. Researches conducted on the issue has led to conclusion that in the right hip-joint there is a lack of certain movements, which consequently causes scoliosis [7]. However, judo training, especially stretching exercises are considered to be very beneficial in protection and treatment of scoliosis. Judo training includes various exercises that stretch region of hips and both sides of spine. Those exercises perfectly protect spine against stiffness and asymmetry. Therefore, judo being a good way in prophylaxis of idiopathic scoliosis, should be practiced at schools because this ailments is more and more common amongst young people.

Not only total fitness but the pattern of fat distribution is important. The abdominal fat deposition appears to be especially dangerous with complication in lipoprotein, glucose and insulin metabolism, but it can be markedly improved by judo training.

Training barefoot on tatami inure body and stimulates nervous receptors in soles. Judogi which are often hardened from perspiration massages skin during the exercise and makes it firmer.

Judo develops not only physique, because it is not a brawl, but a martial art based on principle *Seiryoku Zenyo* (maximum efficiency) what means "that no matter what the goal, in order to achieve it, you must put your mental and physical energy to work in the most effective manner" [8]. Mental powers are: caution, observation, reasoning, judgment and imagination learned by practice of judo. They contribute to mental balance and though it could be considered as intellectual kind of training, it must be separated from broad knowledge taught in school. Hard training and discipline are fundamental to judo.

Sports sociologists and psychologists agree that discipline and training are keys to overcoming fear, nervousness and aggression. Adept of judo are taught to seek through practice a higher level of personal development of mind, spirit and stable emotions which in turn influence wellness. Wellness is one of the most important conditions of health. Training judo learns people to cooperate with partners, to be modest and respectful to teachers and others. It creates harmony in the training area and in social situations.

When practicing judo for the purpose of physical education a wide number of throws and grappling techniques must be thought to exercise each part of the body equally. There is a great difference in the benefits of judo as physical education between those who train only for self-defence and those who train for bringing themselves to perfection. Some young people become overconfident of their health and fail to look after themselves. Sometimes they are careless about dojo, their equipment or hygiene [9]. Social skills are not inherent. They are learned from watching and listening to judo masters who apply various technical capabilities, educational virtues and contribute to positive self-image of their students [10].

Nutrition is very important for fitness. It should be paid a great attention to quality, quantity and time of eating and drinking. Youngsters who often tend to eat too much and too soon before training do not know that food may be detrimental to their fitness.

Judo provides system of physical and mental exercises which help to defend against physical and verbal aggression. It could be expected that people training combat sports and martial arts are more aggressive. But research conducted in the Institute of Sport in Warsaw [11] proved that aggression of the elite of judo and wrestling players with international successes

was only a bit higher than average: between 5.2 to 5.9 sten (in Buss and Durkee scale from 1 to 10 stens).

Judo is not only one of a few branches of sport but it is an art of self-defence, though unfortunately it is disappearing as sport results are getting the most important. Learning self-defence may be more dangerous for health, than training judo as a sport. Through competent training one can take full control over his emotions and aggression. Training must begin with proper warming up and finish with cooling down. Though it is obvious for every instructor, not all of them remember that it is one of the conditions preventing possibility of injury.

Judo is being practiced on tatamis all over the world by young, adults or even middle aged, men and women, tall and short, slim and plump. There are no limitations to begin adventure with judo. It is worth mentioning that a father of Summer Schools in Holland Opa Shutte started to train judo when he was forty and continued to practice for next forty years, being healthy, fit and full of energy.

This is not a proof but an example that judo is good for health.

When moral education in judo is considered it must be cultivated intellectually and emotionally to distinguish right from wrong and good from evil. But high moral standards demand strong will power to incorporate them in real life. It particularly concerns a group of people training or working together and not only avoiding offending each other but helping each other. In judo one cannot practice alone but need assistance of others. Furthermore, the virtues and strengths of one can complement and foster those of another. This is the judo principle *jitakyoei*. The group can act harmoniously, if each member of the group helps and cooperates with others. This is social aspect of health such important in judo and in other aspects of life.

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