The association between physical activity and healthcare costs in children--results from the GINIplus and LISAplus cohort studies.

Abstract:
Physical inactivity in children is an important risk factor for the development of various morbidities and mortality in adulthood, physical activity already has preventive effects during childhood. The objective of this study is to estimate the association between physical activity, healthcare utilization and costs in children. Cross-sectional data of 3356 children aged 9 to 12 years were taken from the 10-year follow-up of the birth cohort studies GINIplus and LISAplus, including information on healthcare utilization and physical activity.
activity given by parents via self-administered questionnaires. Using a bottom-up approach, direct costs due to healthcare utilization and indirect costs resulting from parental work absence were estimated for the base year 2007. A two-step regression model compared effects on healthcare utilization and costs for a higher (>= 7 h/week) versus a lower (= 7 h/week) compared with lower MVPA (< 7 h/week) total direct costs accounted for 392 EUR (95% CI: 342-449 EUR) versus 398 EUR (95% CI: 309-480 EUR) and indirect costs accounted for 138 EUR (95% CI: 124-153 EUR) versus 127 EUR (95% CI: 111-146 EUR). The results indicate that childhood might be too early in life, to detect significant preventive effects of physical activity on healthcare utilization and costs, as diseases attributable to lacking physical activity might first occur later in life. This underpins the importance of clarifying the long-term effects of physical activity as it may strengthen the promotion of physical activity in children from a health economic perspective.

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