



## Physical activity and HIV in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review of correlates and levels

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**Keywords:** Physical activity, exercise, physiotherapy, AIDS, HIV.

### Abstract

**Background:** Self-management strategies such as physical activity (PA) can address disability and optimize mental, physical, social and economic outcomes for persons living with HIV (PLWH). Understanding factors that influence PA behavior in PLWH is a first step in order to devise effective interventions.

**Objective:** The present review provides a systematic review of the correlates of PA in PLWH in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Methods:** Electronic databases were searched till April 2016. Keywords included 'physical activity' or 'exercise' or 'sports' and 'AIDS' or 'HIV'.

**Results:** Ten correlates were identified in 6 studies including 1,015 (329♂) PLWH (mean age range=30.5-40.8years). Lower levels of PA were associated with older age (2/2 studies), a lower number of CD4 cells/μl (1/1), a more severe HIV-stage (1/1), a higher HIV load (1/1), the presence of opportunistic infections (1/1) and a higher BMI (1/1). Fisher's exact tests showed there were more significant correlates in objective tools versus subjective self-report (P=0.03).

**Conclusion:** The current review shows that participation in PA by PLWH in sub-Saharan Africa is associated with a range of complex factors which should be considered in the daily care of PLWH. This however might require repackaging of the current interventions for PLWH to allow a focus on PA.

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