

## AGILITY AS A MODERN FORM OF RECREATION

Monika Niewiadomska

University of Szczecin, Szczecin, Poland

**Annotation.** Physical activity is one of the main factors to influence human health. The beneficial effects of physical exercise and various forms of active recreation can only be observed, however, after systematic application, which usually occurs when exercise is in line with one's interests and preferences. The increasing number of forms of recreation makes it possible to customize these to suit individual needs. One such recreational activity is *agility*, i.e. keeping pace with a dog through an obstacle course while leading the dog through the various obstacles in certain ways. The main purpose of the presenting work was to analyze *agility*'s impact as therapeutic effects on the people of all ages, including children. Currently, *agility* is developing as a sport and a form of recreation in Poland and over the world. Due to its versatility, *agility* is suitable for people of all ages. It is a spectator sport, enjoying growing interest among children, adolescents and adults. This form of physical recreation, next to the positive impact on the physical development, also has a considerable positive impact on the human psyche.

**Key words:** *agility*, physical activity, physical recreation.

### Introduction

Apart from proper nutrition, physical activity is one of the main factors influencing human health. When considering health in terms of mental and physical well-being, any physical activity has a substantial effect on both the mental and physical realm. Human physical activity influences all areas of development and functioning of the body [14, 16].

The **main purpose** of the article was to analyze *agility*'s impact as therapeutic effects on the people of all ages, including children.

### Results.

In a biological context, this activity fosters the development of a healthy, fit and resistant human being. Regardless of age, it has a positive effect on a number of physiological, immune, adaptive, metabolic and hormonal processes. Exercise or sport activity can be undertaken at different ages, and when taken regularly promotes a healthy lifestyle, and improves both well-being and performance at work or school. The physical activity of parents is one way of shaping the attitudes of children and young people towards sports, thereby offer valuable options for free time management of the youth, creating the environment for such involvement and correcting bad habits [11, 12, 15].

Special attention should be paid to those forms of physical recreation that are possible for all ages. Thus physical recreation may have a positive impact on the integration of families and improve relationships between children and parents. It also tends to eliminate adverse factors that accelerate aging and the incidence of disease while promoting a healthy lifestyle (quitting smoking and alcohol abuse, proper nutrition, taking a break from everyday problems, a positive attitude to the world). Any person may quickly notice the beneficial effects of regular exercise on health. It involves improvement in overall well-being, health, appearance and body shape.

Forms of physical activity and recreation have greatly increased in number over the past ten years and are associated with the variety of human tastes. For exercise to be undertaken regularly by humans, it must be in accordance with their interests and preferences. The variety of its forms makes it possible to customize each to suit individual needs [14].

Currently, professional work takes up most of our day. The stressfulness of working conditions and requirements by employers are constantly increasing. These and many other factors force people to look for leisure activities that allow them to relax and reduce nervous tension associated with the stressful situations at work and in everyday life. There is growing interest in natural forms of movement where physical activity is also meant to promote mental relaxation. This is why we may observe an increasing popularity of sports associated with dogs, including *agility* - running with a dog on an obstacle course, while guiding the dog through obstacles.

*Agility* was established in the 1970's and originally served as an interlude during dog shows. The first public demonstration took place at the most famous of dog shows, Crufts Dog Show in 1978, and met with great interest by the audience. Soon the British Kennel Club created *agility* contest rules. Federation of Canines International (FCI) adopted the rules of *agility* and recognized it as a sport in 1991 [2, 5].

*Agility* was modeled on equestrian competitions. Over time, the size of the obstacles and their type were diversified to increase the attractiveness of the sport.

During a competition, each person takes part in three disciplines – *agility* open, jumping, and tests /A0, A1, A2, A3/. Flawless performances at three different competitions of the same class allows competitors to move up to the next class. Final classification combines the points of *agility* open and jumping. Disqualification in any discipline results in total disqualification. Running in *agility* open and jumping differ in the type of obstacles.

*Agility* is a combination of skill and speed. When competitors have the same number of errors over the track, the result is decided by the lowest time. In this way, time only matters when the number of points is the same.

*Agility* competitions, as canine sports, have their own cups and championships per country and also a world championships.

Photo 1. Jumb



source: own

Currently in Poland and over the world, *agility* is developing it two paths - as a competitive sport and as a form of recreation. Competitors that take part in international events also participate in various seminars, camps and *agility* training courses conducted by professional staff. Similarly to any other sport, such involvement consumes most of one's free time [2, 5].

The greatest potential of *agility* lies in it's form of recreation. It brings together people of different ages and their different dogs. At a regional level, competitions include both children and the elderly.

*Agility* is not only a competition but is daily work with one's dog; daily workouts, walks and training. It is a physical activity that does not require specialized skills but a systematic approach. It promotes physical activity from the beginning of the day, and thus facilitates greater fitness and has a beneficial effect on health[1, 3]

In addition to factors influencing physical fitness, *agility* has another very important dimension. The guide and dog form an inseparable team connected by a remarkable psychological bond. Daily workouts with a dog have a very positive influence on the human psyche and promote mental relaxation. This emotional relationship between a person and a dog in a team is very strong and built day after day over several years. Interestingly, on a starting day, the person's stress often affects the dog, similar to the person's joy of winning [4, 13].

*Agility* is not just the thrill of sport competition, but also a lot of fun during training. *Agility* training is different than obedience training. It is a workout through fun. During the game the dog learns to overcome different track sequences, for which it is rewarded and applauded by the guide. Proper execution of the element of the track work has a motivating effect and stimulates further work [1, 3].

*Agility* training requires systematic work by the guide and patience in learning the dog, although it is not enough to succeed. The guide must have speed, agility, good physical condition and good reflexes. Each track is different and each guide has about 7 minutes to remember the order of the obstacles and to plan how to lead the dog. This itself is not an easy task. The combination of a track has about 20 obstacles. A flawless run through a track requires many months of training, commitment and work. Any errors during the run always result from the guide's mistakes, not the dog.

*Agility*, as a spectator discipline requiring considerable involvement, and enhances the involvement of entire families. There is an increasing number of competitions specifically for children, even a European Championships. This has a positive effect on family relationships between parents and children, creates common goals, helps them spend time together and with the family dog, and share successes and frustrations.

The aforementioned benefits of *agility* were taken into account in the creation of an *agility* based programme supporting the rehabilitation of children with type 1 diabetes in Szczecin, Poland, in 2009. It is well known that regular exercise reduces insulin resistance and increases the permeability of cell membranes [9]. It also has a positive effect on metabolism. This effect can only be obtained with a very strict control of exercise intensity. *Agility* runs for children with type 1 diabetes are therefore adjusted to their condition [6, 7, 8]

The training courses have brought about considerable benefits: reductions in HbA1c and a reduction in daily insulin doses. Contact with a dog has also had a positive impact on the psyche of the children, has raised their confidence and given a lot of positive emotions [10].

Photo 2. Agility course



source: own

**Conclusion.** If performed regularly, any physical activity gives benefits at any age. The effects on mental and physical well-being of people are visible as early as after only a few weeks of training, but the significant effect of exercise is also seen after many years, when the body of an elderly person is maintained much longer in good physical condition.

Currently, the development of computerization has resulted in changes in the conditions of our lives. Unfortunately, the adaptive abilities of the human body to the conditions of life around us are not as rapid as technological progress. Hence civilization diseases may be prevented and treated mainly through appropriately healthy active lifestyle.

#### References:

- 1 Bradshaw J. *Understanding your dog and be a better friend black sheep*. Boat, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 12-37.
- 2 Brown L. *Training for Speer Agility*. Human Kinetics, 2005, pp. 5-10.
- 3 Corens S. *Secrets of the canine mind*. Boat, 2006, pp. 17-38.
- 4 Edmunds S., Roche D., Stratton G., Wallymahmed K., Glenn S.M. Physical activity and psychological well-being in children with Type 1 diabetes. *Psychology, Health and Medicine*, 2007, vol.12 (3), pp. 353-363.
- 5 Hares M. *Agility sport and fun*. RM, 2010, pp. 4-29.
- 6 Niewiadomska M., Radziejewska M., Horodnica-Jozwa A., Petriczko E. Use of agility as a form of recreation for the treatment of children with diabetes type 1. *Pediatric Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism*, 2010, vol.7, pp. 89-93.
- 7 Otto-Buczowska E., Jarosz- Chobot P. Effect of exercise on glucose homeostasis in patients with diabetes. *Biochemical medicine and metabolic biology*, 2001, vol.2, pp. 37-41.
- 8 Ponikowska I., Adamczyk P. *Physical activity-an important part of the treatment for diabetes type 1. Diabetes type 1*. Cornetis, 2006, pp. 89-93.
- 9 Rachmiel M., Buccino J., Daneman D. Exercise and type 1 diabetes mellitus in youth: review and recommendations, *Pediatric Endocrinology Reviews*, 2007, vol.5(2), pp.72-76.
- 10 Riddell MC, Iscoe K.E. Physical activity, sport, and pediatric diabetes. *Pediatric Diabetes*, 2006, vol.7, pp. 60-70.
- 11 Romanowski W., Eberhard A. *Prophylactic importance of increased physical activity of man*. Warsaw, PZWL, 1972, pp. 10-14.
- 12 Roslawski Adam. *Prolongs youth movement*. PZWL, Warsaw, 2001, pp. 12-16.
- 13 Rugaas T. *Calming signals. How to avoid conflicts dogs*. Boat, 2005, pp. 10-27.
- 14 Szukalska Teresa. Physical activity and the development of civilization. *Lider*, 2001, vil.4, pp. 7-9.
- 15 Wojnarowska –Soldan M. *Health of young people in Poland*. Youth in school, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 10-12.
- 16 Zak S. Social and behavioral effects of different physical activity of children and adolescents. *Physical Education and Sport*, Warsaw, 1994, vol.1, pp. 25-31.

---

#### Information about the author

**Niewiadomska Monika:** mniewiadomska@wp.pl; University of Szczecin; Al. Piastów 40-B, bl.6, Szczecin 71-065, Poland.

---

**Cite this article as:** Niewiadomska M. Agility as a modern form of recreation. *Physical education of students*, 2013, vol.3, pp. 84-86. doi:10.6084/m9.figshare.663633

The electronic version of this article is the complete one and can be found online at: <http://www.sportpedagogy.org.ua/html/arhive-e.html>

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en>).

---

Received: 05.03.2013  
Published: 23.04.2013