Inactivity is the greatest health risk

By Kasper Lindberg

Forget about smoking and overweight. An inactive lifestyle is by far more dangerous, Bente Klarlund Pedersen, medical professor at Danish hospital Rigshospitalet, told the spectators on Play the Game, Monday night. Many recent scientific studies indicate that people with a sedentary lifestyle are indeed in greater risk of premature death than people who smoke or are obese.

"Studies show that it is healthier to be overweight and exercise than to be thin and lazy," dr. Pedersen said. "This shows that exercise has an independent effect, not only on obesity," she added.

The latest discovery in this field is that the human body contains genes that are totally inactive at rest and will only be activated by exercise – meaning that an inactive lifestyle will see these genes hardly ever activated.

In studies on patients with type II diabetes physical activity proved far more efficient as a treatment than the normally prescribed medicine, Metformin. «This indicates that doctors should not treat their patients with medicine but with changes in lifestyle," said Klarlund Petersen. She emphasizes that this demands somewhat a change of mentality in the medical system – maybe even in the whole way we think about illness.

"Because what do we do to people who are ill? We put them in bed, when in fact nothing shows that this actually helps them."