Paper ID: 76612
student

IAF/IAA SPACE LIFE SCIENCES SYMPOSIUM (A1)
Interactive Presentations - IAF/IAA SPACE LIFE SCIENCES SYMPOSIUM (IP)

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HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY IN SPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF MICROGRAVITY ON THE HUMAN BODY

Abstract

The human body is perfectly adapted to life on Earth, where gravity plays a key role in regulating physiological functions. However, space exploration and long-duration spaceflight have brought about a new set of challenges for human physiology, including exposure to microgravity, radiation, and other stressors that can have profound effects on the body. This research abstract aims to provide an overview of the current understanding of the effects of microgravity on human physiology. One of the most well-documented effects of microgravity is the redistribution of body fluids. In microgravity, the absence of gravity causes fluids to shift from the lower extremities to the upper body, resulting in a condition known as "puffy face, chicken legs." This fluid shift can also cause changes in cardiovascular function, including a decrease in blood volume and a decrease in cardiac output. These changes can lead to orthostatic intolerance, where astronauts experience dizziness, fainting, and other symptoms upon returning to Earth. Another important area of research in human physiology in space is the effects of microgravity on bone and muscle health. Long-duration spaceflight has been shown to cause bone loss, muscle atrophy, and a decrease in overall physical fitness. These changes are thought to be caused by a combination of factors, including reduced weight-bearing activity, altered mechanical loading, and changes in hormone levels. In addition to these physical changes, microgravity can also have effects on the immune system, the gastrointestinal system, and even the brain. For example, studies have shown that microgravity can alter the composition of gut bacteria, which may have implications for astronaut health and well-being. Overall, understanding the effects of microgravity on human physiology is crucial for ensuring the health and safety of astronauts on long-duration space missions. Ongoing research in this area will help to identify strategies for mitigating the negative effects of microgravity, such as exercise programs and nutritional interventions. Furthermore, the insights gained from this research may also have important implications for understanding the effects of gravity on human physiology here on Earth.