A Report of the Surgeon General

Physical Activity and Health

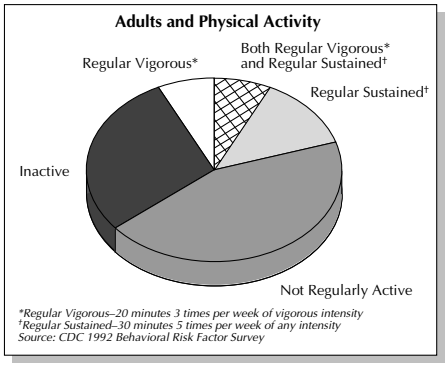
Adults

KEY MESSAGES

- Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve health benefits.
- Men and women of all ages benefit from a moderate amount of daily physical activity. The same moderate amount of activity can be obtained in longer sessions of moderately intense activities (such as 30 minutes of brisk walking) as in shorter sessions of more strenuous activities (such as 15–20 minutes of jogging).
- Additional health benefits can be gained through greater amounts of physical activity. Adults who maintain a regular routine of physical activity that is of longer duration or of greater intensity are likely to derive greater benefit. However, because risk of injury also increases with greater amounts of activity, care should be taken to avoid excessive amounts.
- Previously sedentary people who begin physical activity programs should start with short sessions (5–10 minutes) of physical activity and gradually build up to the desired level of activity.
- Adults with chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, or obesity, or who are at high risk for these conditions should first consult a physician before beginning a new program of physical activity. Men over age 40 and women over age 50 who plan to begin a new program of ***vigorous*** activity should consult a physician to be sure they do not have heart disease or other health problems.

FACTS

- More than 60 percent of U.S. adults do not engage in the recommended amount of activity.
- Approximately 25 percent of U.S. adults are not active at all.
- Physical inactivity is more common among:
  - Women than men.
  - African American and Hispanic adults than whites.
  - Older than younger adults.
  - Less affluent than more affluent people.
- Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

The Nation's Prevention Agency
CDC 50
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

Benefits of Physical Activity

- Reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes.
- Can help reduce blood pressure in some people with hypertension.
- Helps maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression and fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well-being.
- Helps control weight, develop lean muscle, and reduce body fat.

What Communities Can Do

- Provide environmental inducements to physical activity, such as safe, accessible, and attractive trails for walking and bicycling, and sidewalks with curb cuts.
- Open schools for community recreation, form neighborhood watch groups to increase safety, and encourage malls and other indoor or protected locations to provide safe places for walking in any weather.
- Provide community-based programs to meet the needs of specific populations, such as racial and ethnic minority groups, women, older adults, persons with disabilities, and low-income groups.
- Encourage health care providers to talk routinely to their patients about incorporating physical activity into their lives.
- Encourage employers to provide supportive worksite environments and policies that offer opportunities for employees to incorporate moderate physical activity into their daily lives.

For more information contact:

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