CDC's National Physical Activity Initiative

The Challenge

Regular physical activity offers substantial improvements in health and well-being for the majority of Americans, who are not receiving enough physical activity. Moderate physical activity performed on most days of the week can substantially reduce the risk of dying from heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States, and can reduce the risk of developing colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Currently, more than 60 percent of American adults are not regularly active, and 25 percent of the adult population is not active at all.

The Focus

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides scientific and technical leadership and assistance to help states, national organizations, and professional groups promote physical activity. The National Physical Activity Initiative is the primary focus for these efforts and reflects CDC's continuing commitment to reduce the major risk factors for chronic disease in the United States. The initiative has seven key components:

- Program research and development.
- Public information and education.
- Professional education.
- Policy and environmental guidelines development.
- Promotion of partnerships.
- Coordination and leadership.
- Surveillance and evaluation.

Examples of CDC Activities

- CDC released *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General* in July 1996, with its collaborating partner, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.
- Ten national organizations receive grants to promote the report's key messages to children, working adults, senior citizens, and other populations.
- To guide public communications about physical activity, CDC has conducted extensive research among white and African American adults to determine consumer perspectives about physical activity.
- CDC communicates monthly with a network of nutrition and physical activity specialists in state and territorial health departments to expand capacity to develop physical activity and cardiovascular risk reduction programs.

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- The Physician Assessment and Counseling for Exercise (PACE) Project has developed tools for health care providers to use in counseling patients to become more active.
- The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey provide data for monitoring physical activity trends and conducting epidemiologic research on physical activity.
- The Physical Activity and Nutrition Project for Adolescents (PAN Project) is setting a research agenda for promoting physical activity and nutrition among adolescents.
- A resource handbook, *Promoting Physical Activity: A Guide for Community Action*, developed for professionals and volunteers interested in promoting physical activity in schools, worksites, and communities, will be published later this year.
- The second annual Physical Activity and Public Health Research Seminar will be conducted in the fall of 1996 to encourage scientists to pursue population-based research and to encourage practitioners to develop programs.
- CDC is working with the National Institutes of Health to incorporate physical activity as a component of the National Diabetes Primary Prevention trial.
- CDC is supporting school physical activity and physical education through comprehensive school health programs in 13 states.
- The Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant serves as a primary source of federal funding for states to support prevention activities, including activities related to the promotion of physical activity.

For more information contact:

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