

* County Public Health Officer's Update

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2008

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION IN YOUR PRACTICE

The third week of January is Healthy Weight Week and presents an opportunity to inform you about the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines*, a science-based physical activity guide for Americans as a component of chronic disease prevention in your practice. The release of the *Guidelines* is timely as more and more Americans young and old continue to exhibit sedentary behaviors conferring significant health risks throughout their lifespan. It is a comprehensive review and analysis of the scientific literature on physical activity and health published, since 1995, by an external Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, with comments from the public and government agencies.

The review documents very strong scientific evidence that physically active people derive higher levels of health-related fitness, a lower profile for developing a number of disabling medical conditions, and lower rates of chronic diseases compared to inactive people. The benefits of regular physical activity apply to all regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and to those with physical or cognitive disabilities. Regular physical activity also promotes healthy weight, weight reduction when combined with diet, better cardiovascular and muscular fitness, and improved cognitive function in older adults. The *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines* were designed to complement the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to emphasize that being physically active and eating a healthy diet go hand in hand.

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many adverse health outcomes.
- While some physical activity is better than none, higher intensity, greater frequency, and/or longer duration provide additional benefits for most health outcomes.
- At least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity is needed for most health benefits, and additional benefits occur with more physical activity.
- Both aerobic (endurance) and muscle-strengthening (resistance) physical activity promote better health.
- Health benefits occur for children and adolescents, young and middle-aged adults,

older adults, and those in every studied racial and ethnic group.

- Health benefits of physical activity also occur for people with disabilities.
- The benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risk for harm.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: A REVIEW OF THE STRENGTH OF THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Adults and Older Adults

- Strong Evidence
 - Lower risk of:
 - early death
 - stroke
 - type 2 diabetes
 - high blood pressure
 - heart disease
 - adverse blood lipid profile
 - metabolic syndrome
 - colon and breast cancers
- Prevention of weight gain
- Weight loss when combined with diet
- Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Prevention of falls
- Reduced depression
- Better cognitive function (older adults)
- Moderate to Strong Evidence
 - Better functional health (older adults)
 - Reduced abdominal obesity
- Moderate Evidence
 - Weight maintenance after weight loss
 - Lower risk of hip fracture
 - Lower risk of lung and endometrial cancers
 - Increased bone density
 - Improved sleep quality

Children and Adolescents

- Strong Evidence
 - Improved cardio-respiratory endurance and muscular fitness
 - Favorable body composition
 - Improved bone health
 - Improved cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers
- Moderate Evidence
 - Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression

KEY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

Young and Older Adults (18–65 plus years)

- Avoid physical inactivity.
- At least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity or an equivalent combination of moderate-intensity (walking briskly, water aerobics, ballroom dancing, gardening) and vigorous-intensity (race walking, jogging, running, swimming laps, hiking uphill, jumping rope) aerobic physical activity.
- Increase moderate-intensity aerobic activity to 300 minutes for more extensive health benefits.
- Perform aerobic activity in episodes of at least 10 minutes, preferably spread throughout the week.
- Muscle-strengthening activities (weight training, push-ups) that involve all major muscle groups performed on two or more days per week.
- Older adults should determine their level of physical activity relative to their fitness level in consultation with healthcare provider.

- Older adults with chronic conditions in consultation with healthcare provider should engage in activities as their abilities and conditions allow.
- Do exercises that maintain or improve balance if they are at risk of falling.

The benefits of regular physical activity apply to all regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and to those with physical or cognitive disabilities.

Pregnant and Postpartum Women

- Healthy women who are not already doing vigorous-intensity physical activity should get at least two hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week, preferably spread throughout the week. Women who regularly engage in vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or high amounts of activity can continue their activity provided that their

condition remains unchanged and they talk to their healthcare provider about their activity level throughout their pregnancy.

Children and Adolescents (6–17 years)


- One hour (60 minutes) or more of age-appropriate physical activity daily that is enjoyable and offers variety.
- Most of the one hour or more a day should be either moderate-intensity (hiking, skateboarding, bicycling, brisk walking) or vigorous-intensity (jumping rope, running, basketball, ice or field hockey) aerobic physical activity.
- At least three times per week of vigorous-intensity, muscle-strengthening (rope climbing, sit-ups, tug-of-war), and bone-strengthening activities (jumping rope, running, skipping).

Children and Adolescents with Disabilities

- Provide guidance to identify the types and amounts of age-appropriate physical activity as much as their condition will al-

low. Avoid physical inactivity.

Resources:

- The Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report is available at www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/Report/Default.aspx.
- Go to www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/toolkit.aspx to get a toolkit.
- Patients can get *Active Your Way: A Guide for Adults* at www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/adultguide/default.aspx.
- *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005* can be accessed at www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/dga2005/document/default.htm. 

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