

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FACT SHEET

- Physical activity, combined with poor eating habits, contributes to 300,000 preventable deaths a year in the United States. More than 40% of deaths in the United States are caused by behavior patterns that could be modified. A sedentary lifestyle is a major risk factor across the spectrum of preventable diseases that lower the quality of life and kill Americans. Poor diet and physical inactivity (combined) are rapidly approaching tobacco (435,000 deaths) as the leading cause of preventable death in the US.
- Adults 18 and older need 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days a week to be healthy; children and teens need 60 minutes of activity a day for their health.
- Significant health benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount of physical activity (e.g., 30 minutes of brisk walking or raking leaves, 15 minutes of running, 45 minutes of playing volleyball). Additional health benefits can be gained through greater amounts of physical activity.
- Thirty to sixty minutes of activity broken into smaller segments of 10 or 15 minutes throughout the day has significant health benefits.
- Moderate daily physical activity can reduce substantially the risk of developing or dying from cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers, such as colon cancer. Daily physical activity helps to lower blood pressure and cholesterol, helps prevent or retard osteoporosis, and helps reduce obesity, symptoms of anxiety and depression, and symptoms of arthritis.
- Cardiovascular disease (heart attacks, strokes) is the number one killer of men and women in the United States. Physically inactive people are twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease as regularly active people. The health risk posed by physical inactivity is almost as high as risk factors such as cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.
- Nearly half of American adults (4 in 10) report that they are not active at all; 7 in 10 are not moderately active for the recommended 30 minutes a day, 5 or more days a week.
- Poor diet and inactivity can lead to overweight/obesity. Persons who are overweight or obese are at increased risk for high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and some types of cancer.
- Poor diet and sedentary lifestyles can lead to type 2 diabetes. In 2003, 17 million Americans had type 2 diabetes and 16 million more had pre-diabetes. Each year, there are 1 million new cases, and 200,000 people die from diabetes. The cost to the economy is \$132 billion in direct and indirect medical costs.
- Obesity continues to climb among American adults. Nearly 50 million Americans are obese. More than 108 million adults are either obese or overweight. That means roughly 3 out of 5 Americans carry an unhealthy amount of excess weight. The cost of obesity (direct and indirect medical costs) is \$117 billion per year.
- The percentage of adults in the United States who were overweight or obese (body mass index greater than 25) in 1999 was 61%. Overweight and obesity cuts across all ages, racial and ethnic groups, and both genders. A new study in the Netherlands found that excess weight cuts years off your life.

- Overweight among children and teens has doubled in the past two decades; 15% of children aged 6 to 11 years and 15% of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years were overweight in 2000. This prevalence has nearly tripled for adolescents in the past 2 decades. The percentage of overweight African American, Hispanic, and Native American children is about 20%.
- Among children and teens, almost 9 million are overweight, triple the proportion in 1980. More than 10 percent of children between the ages of 2 and 5 are overweight, double the proportion since 1980.
- Health risks associated with being overweight or obese include type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, arthritis.
- The major barriers most people face when trying to increase physical activity are time, access to convenient facilities, and safe environments in which to be active.
- School-based and workplace based interventions have been shown to be successful in increasing physical activity levels.
- Childhood and adolescence are pivotal times for preventing sedentary behavior among adults by maintaining the habit of physical activity throughout the school years.
- Type 2 diabetes, once called "adult onset" diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, once thought to be age-related, are now diagnosed in children and teens.
- Physical activity among children and adolescents is important because of the related health benefits (cardio-respiratory function, blood pressure control, weight management, cognitive and emotional benefits).
- Only about one-half of U.S. young people (ages 12-21 years) regularly participate in vigorous physical activity. One-fourth reported no vigorous physical activity. About 14 percent report no recent vigorous or light-to-moderate activity.
- According to a study done by the National Association of Sports and Physical Education (NASPE), infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- One quarter of U.S. children spend 4 hours or more watching television daily.
- Young people are at particular risk for becoming sedentary as they grow older. Encouraging moderate and vigorous physical activity among youth is important. Because children spend most of their time in school, the type and amount of physical activity encouraged in schools are important.
- Only 26 percent of students in grades 9 through 12 engaged in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more of the previous 7 days in 2001.
- Only 32 percent of students in grades 9 through 12 participated in daily school physical education in 2001, down from 42 percent in 1991.
- Only 17 percent of middle and junior high school and 2 percent of senior high schools require daily physical activity for all students.

Resources

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The facts listed above are based on information from publications prepared by agencies and offices of the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the National Center for Health Statistics; the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States (Physical Activity and Health, 1996; Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, 2001); and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Healthy People 2010).