

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

The Federal Government has issued its first-ever Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. They describe the types and amounts of physical activity that offer substantial health benefits to Americans. These guidelines are needed because of the importance of physical activity to the health of Americans, whose current inactivity puts their health at unnecessary risk. The latest information shows that inactivity among American children, adolescents, and adults remains relatively high, and little progress has been made in increasing levels of physical activity among Americans. You can locate the guidelines at the following website, www.health.gov/paguidelines/, along with FAQs and organizational toolkits. Over the last few months we have covered the nutrients and hopefully inspired some healthier eating habits, but with the release of these new physical activity guidelines we will highlight some areas of the guidelines this month and include a few other tips for improving our physical activity and wellbeing. Remember, substantial health benefits can be gained by doing physical activity according to the guidelines presented for different groups.

Children and Adolescents (aged 6-17)

- Should do 1 hour or more of physical activity every day.
- Most of the 1 hour or more should be aerobic physical activity and done at a moderate or vigorous intensity
- Should do vigorous activity on at least 3 days per week.
- Should also do muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activity on at least 3 days per week.

Adults (aged 18-64)

- Should do 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate intensity or 1 hour and 15 minutes a week of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes and preferably spread throughout the week.
- Additional health benefits are achieved by increasing to 5 hours a week of moderate activity or 2.5 hours a week of vigorous activity.
- Should do muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups performed on 2 or more days per week.

Older Adults (aged 65 and older)

- Should follow the adult guidelines. If this is not possible due to limiting chronic conditions, then a person should be as physically active as their abilities allow them to be.
- Should avoid inactivity.
- Do exercises that maintain or improve balance if they are at risk of falling.

For all individuals, some activity is better than none. Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks. Consult your physician if you have been diagnosed with a chronic health condition before starting an exercise program cold turkey. If you have not been diagnosed with a chronic condition, you probably do not need to consult a doctor before beginning, but remember to start off slow and build up your activity level to avoid injury and/or making yourself quit before you even get started.

From the Nurse's Desk

Nurse Amanda: HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

Tips for Trick or Treaters:

- Carry a flashlight.
- Walk, do not run.
- Stay in familiar neighborhoods.
- Make sure shoes fit properly.
- If no sidewalks, walk on the left side of road facing traffic.
- Wear clothing with reflective markings or tape.
- Approach only houses that are lit.
- Stay away from animals you do not know.

Tips for Parents:

- Make sure your children eat dinner before you head out (to avoid over consuming candy).
- Older children should have a cell or emergency plan to call home.
- Ideally young children should be accompanied by an adult.
- Older children should know where to reach you and when to be home.
- Although tampering is rare, tell children to bring the candy home to be inspected.
- Look at wrapping carefully!
- It is also Flu Season, so dress your children warmly if it is cold this night!!

Tips for Homeowners:

- Make sure your yard is clear of debris to avoid injuries.
- Put pets up.
- Healthy Food alternatives are a hit for parents.

Next Month:

We will continue our look at physical activity with an emphasis on weight control and flexibility. Until then, keep up the efforts for a healthier you.