



Talking Points:

Preventing Diseases through Physical Activity

- ☑ **What Are the Effects of Physical Inactivity?**
 - Physical inactivity has profound effects on health and the cost of medical care:
 - It accounts for 22 percent of coronary heart disease, 22 percent of colon cancer, 18 percent of osteoporosis-related fractures, 12 percent of diabetes and hypertension and 5 percent of breast cancer.
 - It accounts for approximately 2.4 percent of the cost of U.S. health care.
 - Physical inactivity is a primary contributor to obesity. In 2005, 46 states reported obesity rates of more than 20 percent and three states reported obesity rates of more than 30 percent.

- ☑ **What Are the Benefits of Physical Activity?**
 - Increasing regular moderate physical activity among the more than 88 million inactive Americans over age 15 could reduce direct medical costs by as much as \$76.6 billion annually.
 - Individuals can reduce their health care costs by 4.7 percent for each additional day per week during which they are active.

- ☑ **Why Should State Legislators Be Concerned?**
 - More than 50 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits.
 - Among high school students, more than 56 percent of males and more than 72 percent of females failed to meet recommended levels of physical activity in 2005.
 - Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2005.
 - In 1969, 48 percent of children walked to or from school; in 2001, less than 15 percent did.

- ☑ **What Disparities Are Associated with Physical Activity?**
 - Individuals with lower income status and less education are less active.
 - Women of all races, ethnicities and ages are less active than men.
 - Minorities, particularly African-Americans and Hispanics, are less active.
 - Barriers to physical activity for minority youth and adolescents can include costs of fitness club memberships and equipment, demands of child care and lack of safe environments in which to be active.



What Can State Legislators Do?

- **Show leadership.** Communicate with constituents about available physical activity resources, both through the media and in public appearances and serve as a role model by being physically active yourself. Work with state departments of health, transportation, parks and recreation, and education; health care providers and community-based groups to increase opportunities for physical activity in your state.
- **Increase physical activity in schools.** Support efforts to require and improve physical education in schools. Encourage communities and schools to create more ways to walk or bike to school and encourage construction of new schools in walkable locations.
- **Work with local community leaders.** Work with leaders utilizing community-based and faith-based efforts to increase access to physical activity resources, especially among minority populations. Work with community planners to plan and build physical activity-friendly environments.
- **Work with state and local health departments.** Encourage these departments to:
 - Consider cost-effectiveness of strategies to promote physical activity in the allocation of resources;
 - Increase awareness by conducting public health education campaigns and community health fairs targeted to minority populations;
 - Provide risk factor screening and counseling by health professionals;
 - Make grant money available to replicate successful campaigns that encourage the use of stairs by posting "point-of-decision" signs at stairs and elevators; and
 - Provide resources to strengthen support networks such as discussion groups or walking buddy programs.
- **Partner with health practitioners and medical educators.** Work with them to:
 - Ensure physical activity is recommended to all patients;
 - Reduce disparities in physical activity by tailoring patients' exercise programs consistent with cultural characteristics, language/dialect, availability of facilities and financial resources; and
 - Incorporate cultural competency into training and performance standards for health care providers and physical activity instructors.
- **Promote healthy workplaces.** Work with the state health department and state employee benefits program to create wellness and physical activity programs for public employees. Sponsor legislation to provide incentives to employers to establish certified worksite wellness and physical activity programs and limit liability from worksite lawsuits stemming from activity-related injuries. Work with insurance companies to offer premium discounts to employers that engage in wellness initiatives and provide incentives for health care providers to encourage patients to be physically active.

For more detail, see the Legislator Policy Brief, "Preventing Diseases Through Physical Activity," by visiting: <http://www.healthystates.csg.org/Publications/>.

If you would like more information, references, or to explore this topic in greater depth, please:

- send your inquiry to <http://www.healthystates.csg.org/> (keyword: inquiry) or
- call the CSG Health Policy Group at (859) 244-8000.

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