

## The benefits of physical activity and the costs of inactivity

The benefits of regular physical activity are considerable. Physical activity helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles, and joints; reduces falls among the elderly; decreases symptoms of anxiety and depression; and can lessen the need for hospitalizations, physician visits and medications. For the aging population, physical activity can help people maintain independent living and enhance their overall quality of life. Research has shown that, even among frail and very old adults, physical activity can improve mobility and functioning.

Despite the obvious value of leading an active lifestyle, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says almost half of U.S. adults do not meet the Surgeon General's guidelines for accumulating at least 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity most days of the week.

### References:

*National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Chronic Disease Prevention, The Burden of Chronic Diseases and Their Risk Factors National and State Perspectives 2004. Section III.*

*[www.agingstats.gov](http://www.agingstats.gov)*

*CDC, Recommendations of the Second Joint Task Force of European and other Societies on Coronary Prevention European Heart Journal. (1998): 19,1434-1503, Can Fam Physician.2002 Jan;48:65-71*

*CDC, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*

*CDC National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey*

## Economic burden of inactivity

- CDC estimates that if all physically inactive Americans became active, we would save \$77 billion in annual medical costs.

### References:

*[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/bb\\_nutrition/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/bb_nutrition/index.htm)*

*Pratt M, Macera CA, Wang G. "Higher Direct Medical Costs Associated with Physical Inactivity." The Physician and Sportsmedicine 2000, vol. 28, pp. 63-70.*

- The Medicare and Medicaid programs currently spend \$84 billion annually on five major chronic conditions that could be significantly improved by increased physical activity, specifically diabetes, heart disease, depression, cancer, and arthritis.

### Reference:

*Physical Activity Fundamental to Preventing Disease. June 20, 2002.  
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/physicalactivity/index.shtml>*

- The costs associated with inactivity and obesity account for about 9.4 cents of every dollar spent on health care.

*Reference:*

*WHO/CDC Collaborating Center on Physical Activity and Health Promotion, Atlanta, 2000.*

### **Economic benefits of activity**

- An investment of \$1 in physical activity (time and equipment) leads to \$3.20 in medical cost savings.

*Reference:*

*WHO/CDC Collaborating Center on Physical Activity and Health Promotion, Atlanta, 2000.*

- People who participate in moderate-intensity or vigorous-intensity physical activity on a regular basis benefit by lowering their risk of developing coronary heart disease, stroke, non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, and colon cancer by 30–50% (USDHHS, 1996). Additionally, active people have lower premature death rates than people who are the least active.

*Reference:*

*Physical Activity for Everyone: The Importance of Physical Activity: Why should I be active? CDC Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/importance/why.htm>*

- Workplace physical activity programs can reduce short-term sick leave by up to 32%. They can reduce health care costs by up to 55%. And they can increase productivity by up to 52%.

*Reference:*

*WHO/CDC Collaborating Center on Physical Activity and Health Promotion, Atlanta, 2000*

- The average annual direct medical costs are \$1,019 for those who are regularly physically active compared with \$1,349 for those who report being inactive. Engaging in regular physical activity is associated with taking less medication and having fewer hospitalizations and physician visits.

*Reference:*

*Pratt, Michael, M.D., et al. "Higher Direct Medical Costs Associated With Physical Inactivity." *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* 28(10). Oct 2000.*

- If 10% of adults began a regular walking program, the savings in costs associated with heart disease would total \$5.6 billion.

*Reference:*

*Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases Through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity. August 2003. [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/pe\\_factsheets/pe\\_pa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/pe_factsheets/pe_pa.htm)*

- Every dollar spent on physical activity programs for older adults with hip fractures results in a \$4.50 return.

Reference:

*Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases Through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity. August 2003.*  
[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/pe\\_factsheets/pe\\_pa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/pe_factsheets/pe_pa.htm)