



NEWS

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Tips to Get More Active in 2015 from the Montgomery County Health Department ***Leonard Olu-Williams, Public Health Information Analyst***

Norristown, PA (January 16, 2015) – Humans were designed for movement. For the majority of human history, physical demands were a typical and expected part of everyday life. Until the 19th century, humans lived as gatherers, scavengers, toolmakers, hunters, and farmers. Within only a few generations, the physical activity demands of work, domestic chores, and leisure time have decreased so dramatically as to be nearly non-existent in industrialized countries like the United States.

**Approximately Half of U.S. Adults
Do Not Meet Recommended Levels
of Physical Activity**



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2005

As shown in the chart above, more than half of U.S. adults do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity and studies have shown that many of the chronic diseases humans face today are associated with their sedentary lifestyles. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regular physical activity is one of the most important things people can do for their health. Regular physical activity can reduce the risk for type II diabetes, reduce the risk of some cancers, control weight, reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, strengthen bones and muscles, reduce high blood pressure, and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommend at least **150 minutes** each week of moderate aerobic activity for adults—and at least an hour each day of active time for kids.

Many people will be making New Year's resolutions in 2015. Increased physical activity and weight loss are common resolutions. The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories consumed with the number of calories the body burns. Staying in control of weight contributes to good health now and as people age. Here are some suggestions to incorporate into home, work, and recreational life to help become more active this year:

When at home:

1. Go out for a short walk before or after a meal. Start with 5-10 minute walks and work up to 30 minute walks. When walking, pick up the pace from leisurely to brisk.
2. Spend a few minutes pedaling on a stationary bicycle while watching television.
3. Play with the kids — build a snowman or dance to some music.
4. Exercise to a workout video.

Many people have sedentary jobs and work takes up a significant part of the day, but people can still try to be active while on the job.

When at work:

1. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, or get off a few floors early and take the stairs the rest of the way.
2. Join a fitness center near work. Work out before or after work to avoid rush-hour traffic.
3. Get off the bus a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way to work or home.
4. Walk outside during work breaks or during lunch.

During recreation:

1. Plan family outings and vacations that include physical activity (hiking, backpacking, swimming, etc.) Also, when visiting new cities, sightsee by walking, jogging, or bicycling.
2. Do enjoyable activities. If people look forward to a particular physical activity, they may be more inclined to do it.
3. Formulate achievable goals and milestones. For example, if they goal is to lose 20 pounds, think of it as a goal of losing five pounds a month for four months.
4. Share personal goals with others. Having the support of others can both inspire people and hold them accountable for achieving their goals.
5. Remember to ask for help. When at the gym, ask a personal trainer to show the proper way to do an exercise instead of doing it with the wrong form and risking an injury.

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking, is generally safe for most people. Those with a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes, or heart disease, should talk with their doctor to find out if their condition inhibits their ability to be active. It's just important to avoid being inactive. Even **60 minutes** a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity is helpful.

Montgomery County has more than 6,000 acres of public open space that includes nine parks, five historic sites, and over sixty miles of regional trails, all of which can be utilized year round to provide recreational opportunities in a natural environment. For additional information on parks, trails, and historic sites, visit <http://www.montcopa.org/pths>. Visit the Montgomery County Health Department online at <http://www.montcopa.org/health>.