



WHAT WORKS

Increasing Physical Activity

Evidence-Based Interventions for Your Community



Regular physical activity can lead to better health—reducing obesity and the risk of many chronic diseases. Despite the benefits, less than half of all adults, and 3 in 10 high school students in the United States, get the recommended daily amounts of physical activity.^{1,2}

This brochure is designed to help public health program planners, community advocates, educators, and policymakers find proven intervention strategies—including programs, services, and policies—to increase physical activity in their communities. It can help decision makers in both public and private sectors make choices about what intervention strategies are best for their communities. This brochure summarizes information in *The Guide to Community Preventive Services* (The Community Guide), an essential resource for people who want to know what works in public health.

Use the information in this brochure to help select intervention strategies you can adapt for your community to:

- Organize community-wide campaigns about the benefits of being active as part of a highly visible, broad-based, multicomponent strategy.
- Teach people how to change behaviors and develop supportive social environments.
- Make environmental and policy changes that support physical activity.

The Community Guide provides evidence-based findings and recommendations from the Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) about community preventive services, programs, and policies to improve health. Learn more about The Community Guide and what works to increase physical activity by visiting www.thecommunityguide.org/pa.

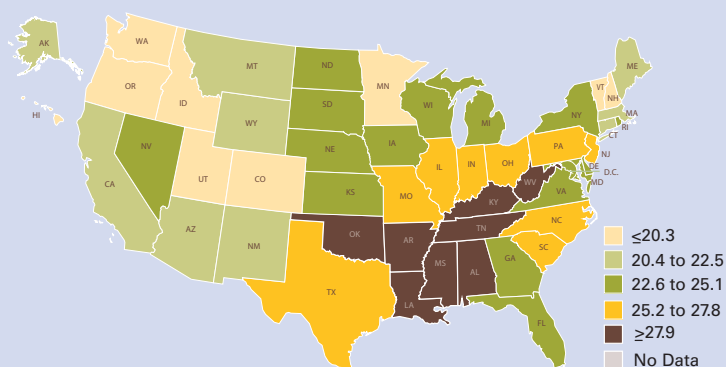
THE PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

Being active benefits people at all ages

In children & adolescents ^{3,4}	In adults ⁴	In older adults ⁴
Improve aerobic and muscular fitness, build healthy bones	Control weight	↑ bone density, ↓ risk of falling and hip fracture
Control weight	↓ heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes	Improve ability to do daily activities
Prevent chronic health problems such as diabetes and heart disease	↓ colorectal and breast cancers	Manage chronic health problems such as diabetes and heart disease
May help improve academic performance	Improve mental health and mood, ↓ depression	Improve cognitive function

Many Americans fall short of daily requirements

Rates of Physical Inactivity Across the U.S. in 2010*



*Rates represent the percentage of people who reported getting no physical activity in the last month. Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

For more information on physical activity in the U.S., see www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity.

EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

- The Task Force findings and recommendations for intervention strategies that promote physical activity are based on systematic reviews of the available evidence.
- The systematic reviews look at the results of research and evaluation studies published in peer-reviewed journals and other sources.
- Each systematic review looks at each intervention strategy's effectiveness and how it works in different populations and settings. If found effective, cost and return on investment are also reviewed when available.
- For each intervention strategy, a summary of the systematic review, evidence gaps, and journal publications can be found on the website in the Promoting Physical Activity section at www.thecommunityguide.org/pa.

Community Preventive Services Task Force

The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide) is an essential resource for people who want to know what works in public health. It provides evidence-based recommendations and findings about public health interventions and policies to improve health and promote safety. The Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force)—an independent, nonfederal, unpaid panel of public health and prevention experts—bases its findings and recommendations on systematic reviews of the scientific literature. With oversight from the Task Force, scientists and subject matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conduct these reviews in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners.

More information about how the Task Force conducts its reviews is available at www.thecommunityguide.org/about/methods.html.

SUMMARIZING THE FINDINGS ON INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

All Task Force findings and recommendations on increasing physical activity are available online at www.thecommunityguide.org/pa. Some of the Task Force recommendations related to physical activity are below.

- ✓ **Campaigns and informational approaches.** Community-wide campaigns increase physical activity and improve fitness among adults and children. These large-scale campaigns are sustained efforts with highly visible messages delivered through TV spots, radio ads, newspapers, and movie theater trailers. They use many additional components, including self-help groups, counseling, risk factor screening, and health education activities at locations and events across the community.
- ✓ **Behavioral and social approaches.** Teaching people the skills to change their behavior and providing social support for doing so are recommended to get people more active.
 - **Individually adapted health behavior change programs** are tailored to a person's interests and needs. They teach skills like goal-setting and problem-solving to help people incorporate and maintain physical activity in their lives. These programs are shown to increase physical activity and fitness and decrease weight in adults and children.
 - **Social support interventions in community settings** focus on building social support networks, such as buddy systems or walking groups. These supportive relationships can help people exercise more often and for longer periods of time.
 - **Enhanced school-based physical education** increases the amount of time students spend in moderate- or vigorous-activity physical education classes. The class can be longer, more frequent or daily, or boost activity level.
- ✓ **Environmental and policy approaches.** Changes to the community's physical environment provide opportunities, support, and cues to help people to be more active by making it easier and safer for them. Effective approaches for increasing a community's physical activity levels and fitness include the following:
 - **Community-scale urban design and land use policies** develop residential areas near stores, jobs, schools, and recreation areas; provide continuous, connected sidewalks and streets; and improve the appearance and safety of the environment.
 - **Creating or enhancing access** to places for physical activity—for example, by developing walking trails and building exercise facilities or providing access to existing exercise facilities.
 - **Street-scale urban design and land use policies** change the physical environment to support physical activity. These changes include improving street lighting and landscaping, making street crossings safer, and installing traffic slowing speed humps and traffic circles.
 - **Point-of-decision prompts** (motivational signs) placed in or near stairwells, escalators, or elevators encourage people to take the stairs. These signs are effective in many different settings, including shopping malls, transit stations, and office buildings.

PUTTING THE TASK FORCE FINDINGS TO WORK

As a public health decision maker, practitioner, community leader, or someone who can influence the health of your community, you can use The Community Guide to create a blueprint for success.

- ✓ Identify your community's needs. Review the intervention strategies recommended by the Task Force and determine which ones best match your needs. Adopt, adapt, or develop evidence-based programs, services, and policies that will facilitate and encourage physical activity in your community.
- ✓ Explore Cancer Control P.L.A.N.E.T.'s **Research-tested Intervention Programs (RTIPs)**, community-based and clinical programs that have been evaluated, found to be effective, and published in a peer-reviewed journal. Look for the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Control P.L.A.N.E.T. icon  on The Community Guide website or visit [rtips.cancer.gov/rtips](https://cancer.gov/rtips) to read about real-world programs that might be adaptable to your needs. You can learn more about RTIPs at www.thecommunityguide.org/cancer/screening/client-oriented/rtips.html.
- ✓ See how other communities have applied the Task Force recommendations and other intervention strategies for increasing physical activity at www.thecommunityguide.org/CG-in-Action/index.html. Get ideas from their *Community Guide in Action* stories.
- ✓ Use **CDC's strategies to increase physical activity** at www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/strategies to develop programs for individuals, employers, and communities. Order the user-friendly book **Promoting Physical Activity: A Guide to Community Action** at www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/strategies/communityguide.html for the tools you need to improve or expand existing programs.
- ✓ Consult **Partnership for Prevention's worksite health resources** at www.prevent.org/Initiatives/Action-Guides.aspx to find evidence-based practices for promoting health in the workplace.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Community Guide: Promoting Physical Activity

www.thecommunityguide.org/pa

Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, CDC

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao

CDC Vital Signs: More People Walk to Better Health

www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/Walking

CDC Prevention Research Center: Center for Training and Research Translation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

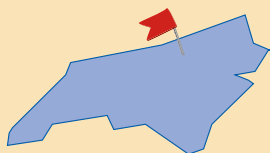
www.center-trt.org

Healthy People 2020 Interventions and Resources on Physical Activity

www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicId=33



THE COMMUNITY GUIDE IN ACTION

**Creating Walkable Communities in Rural North Carolina**

In North Carolina, Granville County used recommendations in The Community Guide to plan the development of more walkable communities. The Granville Greenways Master Plan aims to change the built environment to address the climbing rates of obesity and early death from heart disease and diabetes in the county. After several years of planning, the county's first greenways—corridors of open green space linking neighborhoods and services—were constructed in 2010. The greenways encourage active transportation and help people make physical activity part of their daily lives. See a video on Granville's story at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BWVRg_49Eg.

**Rural Alaskan Community Stays "Fun and Fit"**

With a substantial percentage of school children overweight or obese, the small rural community of Hoonah, Alaska, created a network of cross-sector partnerships to increase physical activity and promote better nutrition in the schools and community-wide. Using a combination of recommendations in The Community Guide—including informational, behavioral, and environmental approaches—the Hoonah Fun and Fit Partnership broadened access to recreational activities and events. Residents report having healthier lifestyles and getting more physical activity.

Read more on these and other stories in *The Community Guide in Action* series at www.thecommunityguide.org/CG-in-Action.

REFERENCES

¹Carlson SA, Fulton JE, Schoenborn CA, Loustalot F. Trend and prevalence estimates based on the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2010;39(4):305–313.

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2011. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 2012;61(SS–4).

³Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. *Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2010. Available at www.cnpp.usda.gov/dgas2010-dgareport.htm.

⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010. Available at www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf

WHAT WORKS

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TASK FORCE FINDINGS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) has released the following findings on what works in public health to increase physical activity. These findings are compiled in The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide) and listed in the table below. Use the findings to identify intervention strategies and interventions you could use for your community.

Legend for Task Force Findings:



Recommended



Insufficient Evidence



Recommended Against

(See reverse for detailed descriptions.)

INTERVENTION	TASK FORCE FINDING
Campaigns and informational approaches	
Community-wide campaigns	
Stand-alone mass media campaigns	
Classroom-based health education focused on providing information	
Behavioral and social approaches	
Individually adapted health behavior change programs	
Social support interventions in community settings	
Family-based social support	
Enhanced school-based physical education	
College-based physical education and health education	
Classroom-based health education to reduce TV viewing and video game playing	
Environmental and policy approaches	
Community-scale urban design and land use policies	
Creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach activities	
Street-scale urban design and land use policies	
Transportation and travel policies and practices	
Point-of-decision prompts to encourage use of stairs	

Visit the “Increasing Physical Activity” page of The Community Guide website at www.thecommunityguide.org/pa to find summaries of Task Force findings and recommendations on physical activity. Click on each topic area to find results from the systematic reviews, included studies, evidence gaps, and journal publications.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides administrative, research, and technical support for the Community Preventive Services Task Force.

UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS

The Task Force bases its findings and recommendations on systematic reviews of the scientific literature. With oversight from the Task Force, scientists and subject matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conduct these reviews in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners. Based on the strength of the evidence, the Task Force assigns each intervention strategy to one of the categories below.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ICON
Recommended	There is strong or sufficient evidence that the intervention strategy is effective . This finding is based on the number of studies, how well the studies were designed and carried out, and the consistency and strength of the results.	
Insufficient Evidence	There is not enough evidence to determine whether the intervention strategy is effective. This does not mean the intervention strategy does not work. There is not enough research available or the results are too inconsistent to make a firm conclusion about the intervention strategy's effectiveness. The Task Force encourages those who use interventions with insufficient evidence to evaluate their efforts.	
Recommended Against	There is strong or sufficient evidence that the intervention strategy is harmful or not effective .	

Visit the “Systematic Review Methods” page on The Community Guide website at www.thecommunityguide.org/about/methods.html for more information about the methods used to conduct the systematic reviews and the criteria the Task Force uses to make findings and recommendations.

RESOURCES

You can use the following resources to guide the implementation of evidence-based strategies and put the Task Force findings to work.

- The Community Guide in Action: Stories From the Field**
Creating Walkable Communities in North Carolina
www.thecommunityguide.org/CG-in-Action/PhysicalActivity-NC.pdf
- Strategies to Increase Physical Activity**
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/strategies
- Promoting Physical Activity: A Guide to Community Action**
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/strategies/communityguide.html
- Partnership for Prevention Action Guides**
www.prevent.org/Initiatives/Action-Guides.aspx
- CDC Prevention Research Center: Center for Training and Research Translation**
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
www.center-trt.org
- Directory of Research Tested Intervention Programs (RTIPs)** 
 National Cancer Institute and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
rtips.cancer.gov/rtips
- Healthy People 2020 Interventions and Resources on Physical Activity**
 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicId=33