

Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Physical Activity: Summary

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Young people can build healthy bodies and establish healthy lifestyles by including physical activity in their daily lives. However, many young people are not physically active on a regular basis, and physical activity declines dramatically during adolescence. School and community programs can help young people get active and stay active.

Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

- Studies show that regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence:¹
 - Improves strength and endurance.
 - Helps build healthy bones and muscles.
 - Helps control weight.
 - Reduces anxiety and stress and increases self-esteem.
 - May improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

In addition, young people say they like physical activity because it is fun; they do it with friends; and it helps them learn skills, stay in shape, and look better.

Percentage of High School Students Participating in Physical Activity and Physical Education, by Sex, 2005²

	Girls	Boys
At least 60 minutes/day of physical activity ^a	27.8%	43.8%
Attended physical education class daily ^b	29.0%	37.1%

^aAny kind of physical activity that increased heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time for at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more of the 7 days preceding the survey

^bAttended physical education classes 5 days in an average week when they were in school



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Consequences of Physical Inactivity

- Inactivity during childhood and adolescence increases the likelihood of being inactive as an adult. Adults who are less active are at greater risk of dying of heart disease and developing diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure.¹

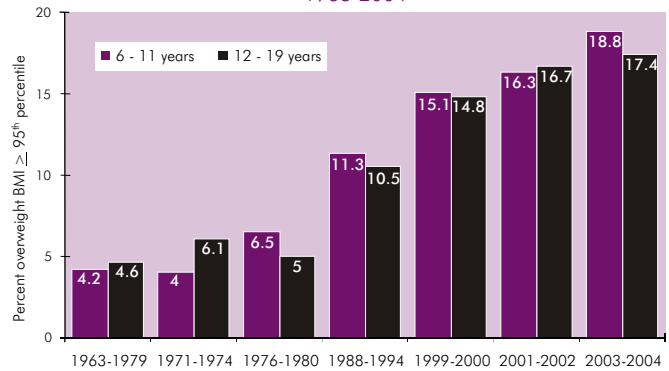
Overweight Among Youth

- The prevalence of overweight among children aged 6-11 has more than doubled in the past 20 years, increasing from 7% in 1980 to 18.8% in 2004.³
- Children and adolescents who are overweight are more likely to be overweight or obese as adults; overweight adults are at increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, some types of cancer, and gallbladder disease.⁴

Physical Activity Among Young People

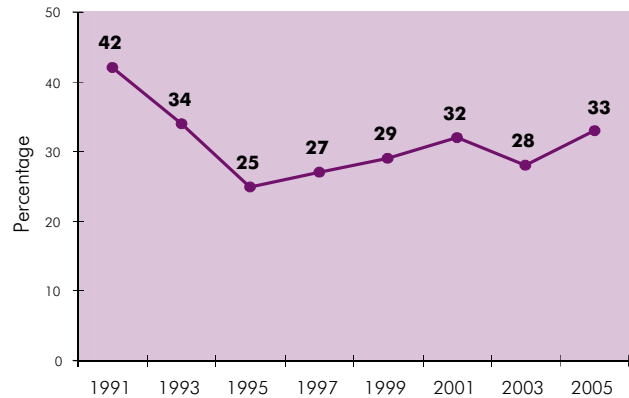
- Thirty-six percent of high school students had participated in at least 60 minutes/day of physical activity on 5 or more of the 7 days preceding the survey.²
- Sixty-four percent of high school students participated in sufficient vigorous physical activity, and 27% participated in sufficient moderate physical activity.²
- The percentage of high school students who attended physical education classes daily decreased from 42% in 1991 to 25% in 1995, and has remained stable at that level until 2005 (33%). In 2005, 45% of 9th grade students but only 22% of 12th grade students attended physical education class daily.²
- Among the 54% of students who attended physical education classes, 84% actually exercised or played sports for more than 20 minutes during an average class.²

Percentage of U.S. Children and Adolescents Who Were Overweight*
1963-2004**



* $\geq 95^{\text{th}}$ percentile for BMI (Body Mass Index) by age and sex based on 2000 CDC BMI-for-age growth charts;
** Data for 1963-70 are only for children (ages 6-11 years) from 1963-65 and only for adolescents (ages 12-17 years) from 1966-70.
Source: National Center for Health Statistics, CDC

Percentage of High School Students Who Attended
Physical Education Classes Daily, 1991-2005²



Young people can benefit from being physically active on most, if not all, days of the week. This should include both moderate and vigorous physical activity.

Examples of moderate activity include:

- Brisk walking
- Bicycling
- Playing actively
- Dancing

Examples of vigorous activity include:

- Running
- Jumping rope
- In-line or rolling skating
- Skipping

CDC's Guidelines for Schools to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity

CDC's Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People were developed in collaboration with experts from other federal agencies, state agencies, universities, volunteer organizations, and professional associations. They are based on an extensive review of research and practice.

Key Principles

The guidelines state that physical activity programs for young people are most likely to be effective when they:

- Emphasize enjoyable participation in physical activities that are easily done throughout life.
- Offer a diverse range of noncompetitive and competitive activities appropriate for different ages and abilities.
- Give young people the skills and confidence they need to be physically active.
- Promote physical activity through all components of a coordinated school health program and develop links between school and community programs.

Recommendations

The guidelines include 10 recommendations for ensuring quality physical activity programs.

1 Policy

Establish policies that promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity.

- Schools should require daily physical education and comprehensive health education (including lessons on physical activity) in grades K-12.
- Schools and community organizations should provide adequate funding, equipment, and supervision for programs that meet the needs and interests of all students.

2 Environment

Provide physical and social environments that encourage and enable young people to engage in safe and enjoyable physical activity.

- Provide access to safe spaces and facilities and implement measures to prevent activity-related injuries and illnesses.

- Provide school time, such as recess, for unstructured physical activity, such as jumping rope.
- Discourage the use or withholding of physical activity as punishment.
- Provide health promotion programs for school faculty and staff.

3 Physical Education

Implement sequential physical education curricula and instruction in grades K-12 that:

- Emphasize enjoyable participation in lifetime physical activities such as walking and dancing, not just competitive sports.
- Help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle.
- Follow the National Standards for Physical Education.
- Keep students active for most of class time.

4 Health Education

Implement health education curricula and instruction that:

- Feature active learning strategies and follow the National Health Education Standards.
- Help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

5 Extracurricular Activities

Provide extracurricular physical activity programs that offer diverse, developmentally appropriate activities—both noncompetitive and competitive—for all students.

6 Family Involvement

Encourage parents and guardians to support their children's participation in physical activity, to be physically active role models, and to include physical activity in family events.

7 Training

Provide training to enable teachers, coaches, recreation and health care staff, and other school and community personnel to promote enjoyable, lifelong physical activity among young people.

8 Health Services

Assess the physical activity patterns of young people, refer them to appropriate physical activity programs, and advocate for physical activity instruction and programs for young people.

9 Community Programs

Provide a range of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs that are attractive to all young people.

10 Evaluation

Regularly evaluate physical activity instruction, programs, and facilities.



References

1. CDC. Physical activity and health: *A report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996.
2. CDC. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance-United States, 2005. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 2006;55(SS-5):1-108.
3. Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, McDowell MA, Tabak CJ, Flegal KM. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1999-2004. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2006;295(13): 1549-1555.
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity*. [Rockville, MD]: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General; [2001]. Available from: U.S. GPO, Washington.

Complete guidelines are available online at <ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4606.pdf>.

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