

## COMMUNITY RESOURCE EXPLORATION MODULE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Healthy People 2010 Physical Activity and Fitness

**Goal** Improve health, fitness, and quality of life through daily physical activity.

**Overview** The 1990s brought a historic new perspective to exercise, fitness, and physical activity by shifting the focus from intensive vigorous exercise to a broader range of health-enhancing physical activities. **Research has demonstrated that virtually all individuals will benefit from regular physical activity.** A Surgeon General's report on physical activity and health concluded that moderate physical activity can reduce substantially the risk of developing or dying from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure. Physical activity also may protect against lower back pain and some forms of cancer (for example, breast cancer), but the evidence is not yet conclusive.

**Issues and Trends** **On average, physically active people outlive those who are inactive. Regular physical activity also helps to maintain the functional independence of older adults and enhances the quality of life for people of all ages.**

The role of physical activity in preventing coronary heart disease (CHD) is of particular importance, given that CHD is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. Physically inactive people are almost twice as likely to develop CHD as persons who engage in regular physical activity. The risk posed by physical inactivity is almost as high as several well-known CHD risk factors, such as cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol.

Regular physical activity is especially important for people who have joint or bone problems and has been shown to improve muscle function, cardiovascular function, and physical performance.

Although vigorous physical activity is recommended for improved cardiorespiratory fitness, increasing evidence suggests that moderate physical activity also can have significant health benefits, including a decreased risk of CHD. For people who are inactive, even small increases in physical activity are associated with measurable health benefits. **For individuals who do not engage in any physical activity during their leisure time, taking the first step toward developing a pattern of regular physical activity is important.**

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Unfortunately, few individuals engage in regular physical activity despite its documented benefits. Only about 23 percent of adults in the United States report regular, vigorous physical activity that involves large muscle groups in dynamic movement for 20 minutes or longer 3 or more days per week. Only 15 percent of adults report physical activity for 5 or more days per week for 30 minutes or longer, and another 40 percent do not participate in any regular physical activity. Each person should recognize that starting out slowly with an activity that is enjoyable and gradually increasing the frequency and duration of the activity are central to the adoption and maintenance of physical activity behavior.

**Opportunities**        The Healthy People 2010 objectives offer opportunities to ensure that physical activity and fitness become part of regular healthy behavioral patterns. Encouraging any type or amount of physical activity in leisure time can provide important health benefits, compared to a sedentary lifestyle. Activities that promote strength and flexibility are important because they may protect against disability, enhance functional independence, and encourage regular physical activity participation. These benefits are particularly important for older people—a good quality of life means being functionally independent and being able to perform the activities of daily living.

Young people are at particular risk for becoming sedentary as they grow older. Therefore, encouraging moderate and vigorous physical activity among youth is important. Because children spend most of their time in school, the type and amount of physical activity encouraged in schools are important components of a fitness program and a healthy lifestyle.

**The major barriers most people face when trying to increase physical activity are time, access to convenient facilities, and safe environments in which to be active.**

From U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000. Available at [www.healthypeople.gov](http://www.healthypeople.gov), October, 3, 2005.

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