

Lack of Physical Activity

CDC works to reduce the four main risk factors for preventable chronic diseases: tobacco use, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and excessive alcohol use.

Only 1 in 4 US adults and 1 in 5 high school students get the recommended levels of physical activity. Not getting enough physical activity comes with high health and financial costs. It can contribute to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, several cancers, and obesity. In addition, low levels of physical activity are associated with \$117 billion in health care costs every year.

People of all ages and conditions can benefit from more physical activity, including aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercises, according to the new [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#). Physical activity contributes to normal growth and development, reduces the risk of several chronic diseases, and helps people function better throughout the day and sleep better at night. Even short bouts of physical activity can improve health and wellness.

Many Americans live in communities that are not designed for physical activity. CDC works to increase the nation's physical activity levels by promoting better community design and more active school and work environments. CDC also supports programs that include physical activity as a way to prevent type 2 diabetes and reduce arthritis pain.

The Harmful Effects of Not Getting Enough Physical Activity

Heart Disease

Not getting enough physical activity can lead to heart disease—even for people who have no other risk factors. It can also increase the likelihood of developing other heart disease risk factors, including obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 Diabetes

Not getting enough physical activity can raise a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Physical activity helps control blood sugar (glucose),

In the United States:



3 IN 4 ADULTS
do not get enough physical activity.



4 IN 5 STUDENTS
in high school do not get enough physical activity.



\$117 BILLION
in annual health care costs are related to low physical activity.





weight, and blood pressure and helps raise “good” cholesterol and lower “bad” cholesterol. Adequate physical activity can also help reduce the risk of heart disease and nerve damage, which are often problems for people with diabetes.

Cancer

Getting the recommended amount of physical activity can lower the risk of many cancers, including cancers of the bladder, breast, colon, uterus, esophagus, kidney, lung, and stomach. These effects apply regardless of weight status.

The Health Benefits of Physical Activity

The *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition* presents new findings on the benefits of regular physical activity, which include:

- Improved sleep.
- Increased ability to perform everyday activities.
- Improved cognitive ability and a reduced risk of dementia.
- Improved bone and musculoskeletal health.

In addition, getting enough physical activity, along with eating a healthy diet, is the best way to maintain a healthy weight. People who want to lose weight may need to get more physical activity and reduce calorie intake.



CDC’s Work to Increase Physical Activity

Data Systems That Measure Physical Activity

CDC’s [Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity](#) uses national and state surveys to track the levels of physical activity among adolescents and adults and the percentage of Americans who are meeting recommendations. CDC also works with partners to measure [community supports](#) for physical activity. These supports include policy and design approaches that enable safe and convenient travel and transportation options for people of all ages and physical activity levels—like bicycle-friendly and Complete Streets policies.

[Data](#) from these surveys are used to understand trends in physical activity and differences in populations and communities.

Better Community Design to Promote Physical Activity

Many people want to get regular physical activity but live in communities that lack safe, convenient places for people of all ages and abilities to be active. CDC aims to help 27 million Americans become more physically



active by 2027 through [Active People, Healthy Nation](#), a comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity based on strategies recommended by the Guide to Community Preventive Services. For example, CDC funds states, communities, and national organizations to collaborate with partners to create [activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations](#) that connect people from where they live to where they need to go. These efforts include:

- Land use and zoning policies that encourage walkability.
- Safe Routes to School programs.
- Complete Streets policies.
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Transportation planning that includes new and expanded public transit.

School Programs That Help Students Be More Active

Schools are in a unique position to help students get their recommended 60 minutes or more of daily physical activity. [CDC Healthy Schools](#) works with states, school districts, communities, and national partners to promote strong [physical education and physical activity](#) programs as part of the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child \(WSCC\) model](#).

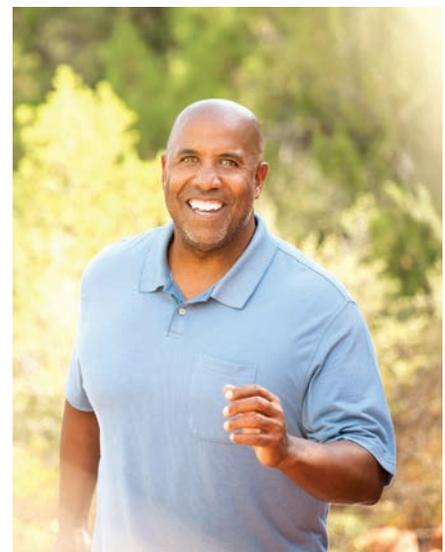
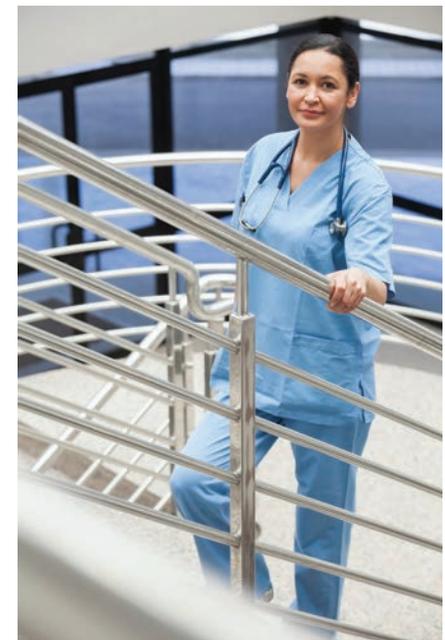
CDC funds [state departments of education](#) and provides specialized tools, recommendations, and resources to help them work with local school districts and schools. The impact and reach of the school health programs developed are shared in [success stories](#) and [videos](#).

CDC also publishes guidance for schools and parents on recess, physical education, classroom physical activity, and staff involvement, as well as ways to increase physical activity before, during, and after school.

Workplace Programs That Help Employees Be More Active

On average, Americans who work full-time spend more than one-third of their day, 5 days a week, at their workplace. CDC's [Workplace Health Promotion Program](#) works with employers and other partners to encourage physical activity in the workplace as part of CDC's [Workplace Health Model](#). CDC focuses its efforts on small and midsize employers because 99% of US employers have fewer than 500 employees, and many lack the expertise and resources to develop effective physical activity and other public health programs.

The Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity created [Steps to Wellness](#), a tool kit that helps employers increase the physical activity levels of their employees. This tool kit provides suggestions on how





to create a wellness culture, examples of what other companies have done to increase wellness at work, and resources to set up or expand a wellness program.

Lifestyle Change Programs That Help Reduce Type 2 Diabetes Risk

More than 84 million US adults—1 in 3—have prediabetes, and 90% of them don't know they have it. The leading preventable risk factors for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes are being overweight and not getting enough physical activity. CDC's [National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) (National DPP) is a partnership of public and private organizations working to deliver an affordable, evidence-based lifestyle change program to help people with prediabetes prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

Participants in the National DPP learn to make healthy food choices, be more physically active, and cope with problems and stress. These lifestyle changes can cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by as much as 58% (71% for those over 60).

Programs That Help People With Arthritis Reduce Pain and Increase Mobility

People with arthritis who take part in “joint-friendly” physical activity can reduce their arthritis pain and improve their function, mood, and quality of life. Examples of joint-friendly activities include walking, biking, and swimming. Being physically active can also delay arthritis disability.

Funding from CDC's [Arthritis Program](#) allows partners to offer the following physical activity programs:

- [Active Living Everyday](#) focuses on helping sedentary people become and stay physically active. About 20 people come together for 1-hour weekly sessions for 12 to 20 weeks of education and discussion to learn how to become more physically active.
- [EnhanceFitness](#) works to increase strength, boost activity levels, and elevate mood. Certified instructors focus on stretching, flexibility, balance, low-impact aerobics, and strength training exercises.
- [Fit & Strong!](#) focuses on sedentary older adults with lower-extremity joint pain and stiffness. It offers stretching, balance, aerobic, and endurance exercises.
- [Walk with Ease](#) is a community-based walking program that meets three times a week for 6 weeks. Trained group exercise leaders begin each session with a pre-walk discussion covering a topic related to exercise and arthritis, followed by a 10- to 40-minute walk that includes a warm-up and cool-down period.