

Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health Fact Sheet

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the No. 1 killer in America. About 950,000 Americans died last year of CVD, accounting for over 40 percent of all deaths.
- Lack of physical activity is a risk factor for coronary heart disease.
- About 250,000 deaths per year in the United States – about 12 percent of total deaths – are due to a lack of regular physical activity.
- The relative risk of coronary heart disease associated with physical inactivity ranges from 1.5 to 2.4, an increase in risk comparable with that observed for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and cigarette smoking.
- Less active, less fit persons have a 30-50 percent greater risk of developing high blood pressure.
- Surveys show that 28 percent of Americans 18 or older aren't active at all. Forty-four percent of adults get some exercise, but they don't do it regularly or intensely enough to protect their hearts. Only 27 percent of American adults get enough leisure-time exercise to achieve cardiovascular fitness.
- Even low-to-moderate intensity activities, when done for as little as 30 minutes a day, can bring benefits. These activities include pleasure walking, climbing stairs, gardening, yard work, moderate-to-heavy housework, dancing and home exercise.
- More vigorous aerobic activities, such as brisk walking, running, swimming, bicycling, roller skating and jumping rope – done most days of the week for at least 30 minutes – are best for improving the fitness of the heart and lungs.

Source: American Heart Association