

Americans Urged to Exercise 1-hour Daily

The National Academies of Science urge Americans to up their exercise and fit in a full-hour of daily activity for good health.

Since 1996, we've heard the message from the Surgeon General to exercise 30-minutes daily for good health. Now the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) have released new recommendations urging Americans to *double* this amount to a full hour of exercise for weight maintenance and added health benefits. Along with dietary recommendations, the 1,000-page NAS report ties exercise and nutrition together as essential components in achieving a healthy weight and reducing disease risk.

After two-years of extensive scientific review, U.S. and Canadian experts concluded that the current recommendations of 30-minutes are insufficient to maintain body weight and achieve added health benefits that reduce many chronic diseases. To prevent weight gain and reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity, and other chronic diseases, 60-minutes of moderate-intensity exercise are necessary. Moderate-intensity exercise is defined as a level where conversation is slightly difficult and a person breaks a light sweat.

Is it too much to ask of Americans?

In a nation where the sedentary lifestyle is common and obesity has reached epidemic levels, some health professionals worry that this recommendation is unrealistic. However, the report indicates that this amount of exercise can be accumulated *throughout the day* in 3, 20-minute sessions or even 6, 10-minute sessions. Many studies have shown a significant reduction in risk of disease and death in moderately active compared to sedentary individuals.

Based on their review, the experts found that 60-minutes are a necessary and appropriate recommendation. In fact, regular exercise is not only associated with physical health, energy, and reduced risk of disease and early death, but may also contribute to overall well-being by improving mental health, decreasing anxiety, stress, and depression, improving mental function, self-esteem, and mood.

References:

National Academies of Sciences. Internet site: www.nap.edu/books/0309085373.html. (September 2002).