



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Take a Walk

Walking for Transportation or Leisure Among Men and Women – United States, 2005-2015

Recorded: June 27, 2017; posted: June 29, 2017

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

Regular physical activity is important for maintaining good health. One activity that's easy and readily available to most people is walking.

Dr. Emily Ussery is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the health benefits of walking. Welcome to the show, Emily.

[Dr. Ussery] Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Dooling] Emily, how much physical activity is recommended to maintain good health?

[Dr. Ussery] Well, to really gain the health benefits that are associated with physical activity, adults should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking, or they can do 75 minutes a week of vigorous intensity activity, like jogging or running, or an equivalent combination of both types. A good rule of thumb is that one minute of vigorous intensity activity is about the same as two minutes of moderate intensity. Aerobic activity should be done in periods of at least 10 minutes at a time and it should be spread throughout the week, if possible. It is important for people to remember that all adults should avoid inactivity, so some activity is always better than none at all.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the health benefits of regular physical activity?

[Dr. Ussery] Well, physical activity is one of the most important things that people can do to improve their overall health, and walking is a great way for people to start and maintain a physically active lifestyle. People who are physically active live longer and have a lower risk of many chronic diseases, like heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and depression. Physical activity can also help people who are living with chronic conditions manage their symptoms and it supports positive mental health and healthy aging. Now, walking is just one way that adults can be physically active, but it has many unique advantages. First, it's easy to do, it doesn't require any special equipment or skills, and most people are able to walk. Walking can serve many purposes, which makes it a really good way to add physical activity into a busy lifestyle. People walk for exercise, to socialize with their friends, or as a mode of transportation to get to school, to work, or to other nearby destinations.

[Dr. Dooling] How many Americans walk for those reasons?

[Dr. Ussery] In 2015, 65 percent of women and 63 percent of men reported that they walked for transportation or for leisure for at least 10 minutes at a time during the past week. The good news is that more adults are walking today, compared to 10 years ago when only about 56 percent of adults reported walking.

[Dr. Dooling] Are there any obstacles to developing a walking regimen?

[Dr. Ussery] Although walking is one of the most common forms of physical activity, about one-third of American adults still do not walk. There are some common barriers that people report, which include lack of time, concerns about traffic safety, or perceptions of crime in the neighborhood. The way that an individual's community is designed and built can also make it difficult or easy for them to walk. So if a community has busy streets with no paths or sidewalks and destinations are really far from the homes, it might be difficult and unsafe for residents to walk places. But if a community has sidewalks and pleasant trails, a good public transit system, and places, like schools or shops or parks that are located close to homes, it would be easier for people to make the decision to walk.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about walking for exercise?

[Dr. Ussery] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/physicalactivity.

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Emily. I've been talking today with Dr. Emily Ussery about the health benefits of walking.

Taking regular walks benefits the cardiovascular system and strengthens joints and muscles. No special equipment is needed, just comfortable clothes and a good pair of walking shoes.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.