

# The President's Challenge

## **What Shape are Americans in Today? Facts about physical fitness and our nation.**

It's no secret that Americans need to shape up. Recent studies show that well over half of all Americans are not regularly active, and worse yet, 25 percent of Americans are not active at all. For young people - the future of our country - physical activity declines dramatically during adolescence. These are dangerous trends. We need to turn them around quickly, for the health of our citizens and our country.

The following are statistics on specific segments of the U.S. population provided by the offices of the Department of Health and Human Services: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the National Center for Health Statistics; the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States (2001). and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Healthy People 2010, 2001); U.S. Bureau of Census.

### Children/Youth

About 8 million young Americans - approximately 15 percent of all children - are overweight. The number of overweight adolescents has tripled since 1980.

Type 2 diabetes, unheard of in young people 10 to 15 years ago, is increasing dramatically across the United States among adolescents.

One-fourth of children in America spend four hours or more watching television daily.

Only about half of U.S. young people (ages 12-21 years) exercise regularly. One-fourth reported no recent vigorous or light-to-moderate activity.

Three-quarters of overweight and obese children do not change their habits and remain overweight and obese in adulthood.

### Adults

Cardiovascular disease (heart attack, stroke) is the number one killer of men and women in the United States. Physically inactive people are twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease as regularly active people.

61 percent of adult-Americans are overweight. Overweight and obesity cuts across all ages, racial and ethnic groups, and both genders.

Seventeen million Americans have diabetes and 16 million more have pre-diabetes. The cost to the economy is \$132 billion annually in direct and indirect medical costs.

### Women

More than 60 percent of U.S. women do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity; more than 25 percent of U.S. women are not active at all.

Four of the ten leading causes of death in American women (heart disease, breast and colon cancer, hypertension and stroke, and diabetes) are chronic diseases directly associated with modifiable behavioral factors including physical inactivity or sedentary lifestyle.

Physical inactivity is more common among women than men

## Seniors

By 2050, the proportion of Americans over age 65 will approach 22% - nearly one in four.

Inactivity increases with age. By age 75, about one in three men and one in two women engage in no physical activity.

Regular physical activity can play a major role in improving many age-related declines in the musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems.

Among adults aged 65 years and older, walking and gardening or yard work are, by far, the most popular physical activities.

Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity.

People of all ages can improve the quality of their lives through a lifelong practice of moderate physical activity. You don't have to train for the Boston Marathon to derive real health benefits from physical activity. A regular, preferably daily regimen of at least 30-45 minutes of brisk walking, bicycling, or even working around the house or yard will reduce your risks of developing coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes.